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EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WRITINGS

OF

FRANCIS FENELON,

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

WITH

SOME MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

LETTERS,

EXPRESSIVE OF

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

THE WRITER NOT KNOWN.

Recommended to the perusal and notice of the religiously disposed.

BY JOHN KENDALL,

PHILADELPHIA:

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PREFACE.

THE Editor of the following Abstract met with so much instruction in reading the Archbishop of Cambray's writings, as to incline him to select certain parts of them, with a view to his own profit in some future time; and having proceeded further in it than he at first expected, concludes to publish them in a small volume for the benefit of others.

And as this may come into the hands of some who have not had opportunity of knowing much concerning this good man, the following short memoirs of his life are added, written soon after his death by one of his intimate acquaintance.

When he accepted the Archbishopric of Cambray, he resigned the Abby of St. Vallery, which had been given to him by the King, without asking it for any of his friends; the King wondered at it, and pressed him to keep it; but he represented, that the revenues of the bishopric being more than sufficient, he thought himself in that case wherein the canons forbid plurality of benefices. He relinquished, at the same time, the priory, which he had from his uncle. So rare a disinterestedness gained him great respect; but

it also occasioned a certain grudge against him, in those persons whom his example condemned. This was about the year 1695.

The high favour he was now in seemed to promise a greater advancement; but there arose a storm against him, which carried him for ever from the court. He became acquainted with Madame Guyon, a religious and virtuous woman; for whom he had conceived a favourable opinion, and refused to condemn her writings, as was desired of him.* This gave offence to some of his former friends, and he was represented as an obstinate man, incapable of submission to the judgment of his brother prelates. They were further displeased with a book he had written to explain his sentiments more fully; and with these impressions the King was induced to confine him to his diocese, and to deprive his relations of their employments, and banish his friends from court. His good understanding, and the purity of his life, were no longer considered: his friend was to pass for a whimsical enthusiastical woman; and himself for the promoter of a senseless and profane sect.

* This excellent woman was much persecuted by some of the Bishops, and at length imprisoned; where she remained some years sick, and in a suffering condition. She often requested that her crime might be specified, and proved: but her enemies not being able to make any thing appear against her, she was at length discharged out of custody, and exiled to Blois, where she lived near twelve years, honoured and respected, for her good understanding, sincere piety, pure and modest virtue; even by those who had the strongest prejudices against her.

Thus confined to his diocese, he there enjoyed that peace of mind which never fails to accompany pure virtue. He applied himself to make men good and happy, by discharging, with great care, all the functions of his episcopal character. He assisted at the examinations of persons who were about to be appointed to the ministerial office, and had conferences with them every week upon the principles of religion, in which he listened to their enquiries with great patience, and gave his answers with a fatherly goodness.

Notwithstanding the disorders occasioned by the war, he was very assiduous in the visitation of his diocese, and preached in every church. All his sermons came from the abundance of his heart, without being written down. In these public discourses love was the great point in which he made every thing terminate; but it was such a love as produces, and perfects all the Christian virtues. He avoided all refined ideas, and superfluous ornaments, which are contrary to the simplicity of the gospel: and sought only to speak as becomes a good father, so as to comfort, relieve, and enlighten his flock. In considering the affairs of the diocese, he never took advantage from his rank, or his talents to decide in any matter by his authority alone, without persuasion. 'The shepherd' he used to say, 'has yet more need of 'being docile than the flock: he must be con-'tinually learning, that he may be able to

'teach, and must oftentimes obey, in order 'to govern well. The wise man increases 'his own wisdom by that which he gathers 'from another.'

The Bishop's practice was agreeable to his doctrine, severe to himself: he did not, however, affect an austere air, but was cheerful in all his deportment. He slept little, and was very moderate in his diet: and allowed himself no pleasure but what is found in filling up his duty. His chief recreation was to take the air; and when he went thus abroad, he spent the time either in useful conversation with his friends, or in seeking some occasion to do good to the people. If he met with any of the peasants in his way, he would ask them questions about the state of their family, and gave them advice how to regulate their little affairs, and to lead a religious life. Sometimes he went into their cottages to speak to them of God; and to comfort them under the hardships they endured. He became, in a manner, one of them, through the tenderness of a heart deeply affected with the love of a Saviour, who was poor.

Poor himself, in the midst of plenty, he gave almost all his revenue away to hospitals; young clergymen, whom he educated; decayed gentlemen; and persons of all ranks, and of different nations, who, during the time of war, were within the reach of his generosity.

But these things, which were generally admired in him, were nothing in comparison

of that divine life, by which he walked with God, like Enoch, and was unknown to men. It is, however, Christianity alone which can raise to that peace of the Holy Spirit, and inward tranquillity, which excludes, not only unprofitable actions, but even useless thoughts. This internal quietude he endeavoured to attain, while he was outwardly employed in performing the duties of humanity, religion, and his vocation.

The piety he taught was far from leading to a refined deism, and an independence on all visible authority; as his adversaries insinuated, it furnished, on the contrary, the most solid proof of true Christianity. His thoughts concerning the state of man by nature, are, that he is born diseased, but that the remedy is ever at hand to cure him. The light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world, is never wanting. Every man shall be judged by the law which he has known, and not by that which he has not. No one shall be condemned, but for neglecting to profit by what he knew: the religion of Christ consists in charity. The ceremonies and priesthood are but salutary aid to succour our weakness; outward and sensible signs to encrease in ourselves and others the knowledge and love of our common father. Very soon these means shall cease, the shadows shall disappear, and the true temple be opened.

Jesus Christ has taught us to look upon this life, this short moment of our banish-

ment, here below, as the infancy of our being, and as an obscure night, in which all the pleasures we meet with are but transient dreams; and all the evils we feel but wholesome bitters, to wean us from the love of this world, and make us press forward to our true and native country. Penetrated with a sense of our nothingness, our inability, and blindness, he would have us present ourselves before him, the Being of beings; that he may impress his image upon our souls, enlighten and animate us; and thereby produce in us the choicest virtues, till at length being made wholly conformable to him, he shall consummate us in his divine fellowship. This is that worship in Spirit and in Truth, of which the gospel speaks.

Thus the Archbishop expresses himself in some of his writings, which shews the good disposition of his mind. In the latter years of his life, he had an opportunity of manifesting his love for his country, and for strangers, in an eminent manner. The war drawing near to Cambray, he became the admiration of the army, by his charity for the sick and wounded, and by the hospitality of his house. His charity went so far as to hire houses for the reception of the distressed. Such an expense might be thought excessive, at a time when his revenues were much lessened by the neighbourhood of the army; but the wants of the distressed were the measures of his liberality. His house was open, not only to persons of dis-

tinction, but was a place of refuge to the poorest people. The sudden motions of the armies and the disorders that attended them, obliged sometimes whole villages to seek that safety in the town, which was not to be found in the open country. As many as could be conveniently were lodged in his house: and neither the painful sight of the condition of some, nor the infectious disorders attending others, could abate his zeal. He walked up and down among them, like a good father, shewing, by his sighs, how much his heart was moved with compassion. His presence and words tended to alleviate their distress.

The veneration in which he was held, was not confined to the French army alone. He was no less respected by the enemy. The Duke of Marlborough, Prince Eugene, and the Duke of Ormond, shewed him all sorts of civilities. They sent detachments to guard his meadows, and corn; and caused his grain to be conveyed to Cambray, lest it should be carried off by their own foragers. Such a commanding power has true virtue over all hearts. As he was thus loved and respected by strangers, so he received them with great cordiality, of whatever religion they happened to be. However, he made no other use of the esteem men expressed for him, but to do them good. His soul was raised too high above the objects of human ambition to be dazzled with them.

It is worthy of notice with what facility he suffered himself to be interrupted in any business he was about, that he might communicate himself to all, and give himself up to the discharge of those duties, which daily, and even hourly, occurred, as it were for the exercise of his patience and meekness. It was thus that one day being obstructed, in a work he had a mind to finish, by one of his friends, who was leaving Cambray, and his friend endeavouring to excuse the interruption, he replied, "Be in no concern; you do me more good by interrupting me, than I should have gained by pursuing what I was about."

However agreeable his conversation was in public, it was more so in private with his friends. Divine love was in him a source of the purest and most generous friendship: the sentiments of his heart are pretty fully described in a letter he wrote to his pupil, the Duke of Burgundy; an extract of which is as follows:

"Divine love," he says, "is not always accompanied with a sensible fondness; but it is hearty, faithful, constant, and effectual. Love will make us bear every thing, suffer every thing, hope every thing for our friend: it will surmount all uneasinesses: it will melt with compassion for the misfortunes of others: it will weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. It will do this, not by a constrained outside appearance, and a ceremonious complai-

sance, but from the abundance of the heart; in which divine love will be a living source to furnish it with all the sentiments, and dispositions of the most affectionate and substantial kindness."

He used much caution in his conduct, and way of behaviour, towards his friends. He saw their faults, and bore with them with great mildness, and sweetness of temper: waiting for the proper time of speaking, and laid hold of it when it came. He also knew how to season his advice, in such a manner as that the most unpleasing truths did not give offence.—Divine charity, he says, makes great allowances for the weaknesses of others; bears with them; and treats them with gentleness and condescension: it is never over hasty in its proceeding: it may be necessary to wait long for a favourable opportunity to give one single piece of wholesome advice: imperfect virtue is captious, censorious, severe, and implacable; but perfect virtue is uniform, meek, affable, and compassionate. "It takes every burthen upon itself, and aims chiefly at doing good. It is this principle of disinterestedness, with regard to ourselves, and of compassion for others, which is the true bond of society."

This sweet and mild disposition in the Archbishop, did not, however, hinder him from speaking the truth to his friends, when he thought it necessary; he also was desirous they should use the same freedom to-

wards him, as appears by the manner of his writing, as follows:

"I request you, more than ever, not to spare me in telling me my faults, though you should think you discover a fault in me, which perhaps I have not, the harm will not be great. If your intimation and advice offend me, I shall thereby see that you have reached the quick; and thus you will still do me a great benefit, by inuring me to reproof, and to a Christian lowliness of spirit. The higher I am raised, by my character, the more I ought to be humbled. And I hope, that far from weakening our union, it will be a means to strengthen it."

Neither absence, nor distance, could lessen his affection towards his friends, though he had not seen them of a long time. In one of his letters, he says, "Let us all dwell in our only centre, where we may continually meet, and be but one! We are very near, though we see not each other; whereas people, who are in the same house, and chamber, may live at a great distance, as to a true fellowship: God unites and brings together the most remote points of distance, with regard to those hearts that are united in him!"

Though he was resigned to the divine will, yet nobody was more sensibly touched with the loss of his friends: true virtue regulates the passions without extinguishing them, and can reconcile the sentiments of humanity with those of religion, so that the one shall

not destroy the other. He used to weep for the death of his friends, without hiding his tears. Yet, in the midſt of his grief, he still preserved his tranquillity, and comforted those who mourned like himself, for the loss sustained.

In the beginning of the year 1715, he fell ill of an inflammation of his lungs, attended with a fever, which lasted about six days, with sharp pains: during this time he gave all the tokens of a truly Christian patience, meekness, and constancy; in his last moments, the only words he uttered, were, *Not my will, but thine, be done.*

It appeared, after his death, that he had not made it his care to accumulate riches, but died poor; as he had lived, in a great measure, without money, and free from debts.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

WRITINGS OF FENELON,

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

The Necessity of knowing and loving God.

WE should consider that we are nothing of ourselves; we are only what God made us to be, and only for such time as he pleases. He need only withdraw his hand, which supports us, to plunge us into the abyss of our own nothingness; as a stone, which we hold in the air, falls by its own weight when we no longer hold it. We have not, therefore, being or life, but through the gift of God.

Again there are other blessings of a still more pure and elevated kind: a good life is worth more than the life itself; virtue is of a greater value than health; rectitude of heart, and the love of God, are as much above any temporal gifts, as the heavens are above the earth. If, therefore, without his help we cannot for one moment possess those favours so gross, how much more certainly must he give us those sublime gifts of his love.

O, my God, not to know thee then, is to regard thee as out of us, as an Almighty Being that gives laws to all nature, and has made all things visible! This is but to know one part of that which thou art, and to be ignorant of that which is most wonderful, and most concerns thy reasonable creatures.

That which elevates my soul, and inspires me with hope, is, that thou art the God of my heart; there thou doest all that pleaseth thee. When I am good, it is thou that makest me so: it is thou that animatest my soul, as my soul animates my body; thou art more present and intimate to me, than I am to myself. This self, for which I have so much sensibility, ought to be a stranger in comparison of thee: it is thou that gavest it to me, therefore thou requirest that I should love thee more than it.

What a comfort it is, O my God, to think that every thing is the work of thy hand, all within and all without me. Thou art always with me. When I do evil, thou art with me, reproaching me for the evil I do, making me regret the good I have omitted, and shewing me a mercy which stretcheth forth its arms to receive me. When I do good, it is thou inspirest me with the desire of it, and effectest it in me; it is thou that inclinest my heart to love the good, and detest the evil; it is thou that sufferest, that entreatest, that edifiest my neighbour, that givest alms. I do all these things, but it is through thee, who causest me to do them. These good works,

which are thy gifts, become thy works; but they are always thy gifts, and cease to be good works, when I regard them as my own, an dwhen their being thy gift (which alone makes them valuable) escapes my sight.

O, Father of mercy, I will no longer reason on thy grace, but silently resign myself to it: it does all in man, it is by it that I act, and that I forbear, that I suffer, that I believe, that I hope, and that I love. If I obey its influence, it will be all in me; by it I shall effect all; it is this that moves the heart, but in the end the heart must be moved, and thou dost not save man without his co-operation: Therefore it is my business to work without delay, that I may not check that grace which impels me; all the good I have proceeds from it, all the evil from myself. When I do good, it is that animates me; when I do evil, it is because I resist it. God would not that I should know more than this, every thing else would only serve to nourish in me a vain curiosity.

When shall we love God truly? When shall we seek him who seeks us, and carries us in his arms? In his tender and paternal bosom we forget him; it is the sweetness of his gifts, that prevents our reflecting on the giver: those favours which he is every moment bestowing upon us, instead of melting us into love, only serve to attract our attention from its proper object.

The most excellent prayer is nothing else but the love of God ; its excellency consists not in the multitude of our words, for they are not necessary to make known unto God the sentiments of our hearts.

True prayer then is that of the heart, and the heart can only ask that which it desires. To pray then is to desire, but this desire must be according to the will of God.

They always pray, whose hearts always feel true love and desire. That love which is hidden in the bottom of their souls, prays without ceasing ; even while the spirit cannot be actually attentive. God ceases not to regard in the soul that desire which he forms himself, though the soul is not always conscious of it : it is a secret voice which perpetually draws down his mercies ; it is this spirit, which, as St. Paul says, " Helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans viii. 26.

This love solicits God to give us what we want, to overlook our defects, and regard the sincerity of our intentions ; it blots out our smaller offences, and purifies us as a consuming fire : it prays for us according to the will of God ; for we know not what to pray for as we ought, and would often ask what would prove hurtful to us, as certain pious fervours, sensible tastes, and an apparent perfection, which would only serve to nourish the natural life, and a confidence in our own strength.

When we are busied in outward things, and the discharge of our duty in that state in which Providence has placed us, unavoidably causes distraction, we nevertheless carry within us a fire which never goes out; but, on the contrary, nourishes a secret prayer, which is a lamp incessantly burning before the throne of God; "if we sleep our heart waketh." Cant. v. 3. "Blessed are those whom the Lord shall find thus waking." Luke xii. 37.

To preserve this spirit of prayer, so necessary to our union with God, we must observe two principal things; the one is, to endeavour to nourish it; the other, to avoid every thing that may deprive us of it.

That which deprives us of the spirit of prayer, ought to fill us with terror, and calls for all our caution. Thus we ought to fly those vain companions who dissipate us too much, those pleasures which excite the passions, every thing that awakens a relish for the world, and those old inclinations which have been fatal to us.

Meditation is not prayer, but it is the necessary foundation of it. It makes us sensible of those truths which God has revealed to us. By meditation, we shall learn not only the depth of the mysteries of Christianity, and the truths of the gospel; but also all that these truths ought to impress upon our minds, in order to our regeneration: these truths ought to be a long time sinking into our

hearts, as the dye by degrees tinges the wool that imbibes it.

A man who owes himself to the public, would offend God, should he think himself in union with him, while he passed that time in meditation and retirement, which was necessary for the discharge of the duties of his employment.

The true union with God, consists in fulfilling his will in the most wearisome and laborious duties of our state, without relaxation, and in opposition to all our natural aversions.

The general cautions against dissipation are, to avoid, as much as possible, all connections and intimacy with people whose maxims are in opposition to those of Christianity; especially when these infectious maxims are such, as we have formerly been seduced by. They will easily cause our wounds to bleed afresh, as they have a secret intelligence with the bottom of our hearts, where there is a soft and insinuating counsellor always ready to blind and betray us.

The holy scripture advises us to judge of a man by his friends. Eccles. xiii. 20. And indeed, how can he who loves God, and desires no longer to love any thing but through him, choose for his bosom friends, those who neither love nor know God, and who regard such an affection as a contemptible weakness? Can a heart full of God, and that is sensible of its own weakness, can it ever be at rest among those whose senti-

ments never agree with it, and with whom it is in continual danger of losing all its treasure? The taste of such people, and the taste that faith inspires, are absolutely incompatible.

I am very sensible there are worldly attachments, which neither can nor ought to be broken. There are friends to whom we are bound by an esteem for their natural good qualities, by gratitude, by the attachment of a sincere friendship, and lastly, by the laws of decency, and necessary intercourse. To withdraw entirely our confidence and familiarity from such persons, would wound them to the heart. But then, without breaking with them, or avowing any coolness, there are gentle and imperceptible means of lessening our intercourse with them. We may distinguish them from common acquaintances, converse with them in private, and open our hearts to them on certain subjects, where probity and friendship are sufficient to enable them to give us good advice, and where our sentiments may agree; though perhaps the very same judgment in us, may proceed from motives more pure and elevated than any they are actuated by.

Finally, we may continue to serve them with all the assiduity of the most cordial friendship, without giving up our hearts to them.

Nothing can be more dangerous than the neglect of such precaution; and if we do not in the beginning exert ourselves courageous-

ly to render our piety free and independent of such irreligious friends, it is a piety that threatens approaching ruin. If a man, who is beset with such friends, is naturally weak, and his passions easily inflamed, it is certain these friends, be they ever so sincere, will draw him back from his devotion. I will suppose them, if you please, virtuous, honest, full of fidelity, and every thing that constitutes friendship, in the eyes of the world. Yet all this avails not, nor will it prevent their corrupting him. The more amiable they are, the more they are to be dreaded. As for those who have not these amiable qualities, they must immediately be given up; and we should esteem ourselves most happy that a sacrifice which ought to cost so little, can be available towards a security so momentous, as that of everlasting life.

Besides this care with regard to our companions, we must carefully observe some hours to converse with God alone, in solitude and prayer. Those who are in great employments, have so many indispensable duties to attend, that they have little time left for this holy intercourse with God, unless they are very careful in the management of their hours: so little, that if they have any inclination for amusement, they will with difficulty, observe the appointed hours, for the service of either God or their neighbour.

We must then steadily adhere to some rule: the severity of observing it may ap-

pear excessive; but without this regularity all will fall into confusion, we shall become dissipated, relaxed, lose our strength, and become insensibly more and more alienated from God; nor shall we perceive this wandering of our hearts, until we have strayed so far, that we have neither hope nor courage sufficient to enable us to return.

Let us pray then, let us pray. Prayer is our only safety. *Blessed be God who hath not cast out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me.* Psl. lxvi. 20. To be faithful in prayer, we must be faithful in regulating all the occupations of the day with an inflexible resolution.

Be content with your daily bread, and remember that in the wilderness the manna they gathered for more than one day, presently corrupted; so true it is, that the children of God should be wholly intent upon rightly employing their present graces, without desiring to anticipate the designs of his Providence upon them.

In this way God will be your guide, and will himself travel with you, as he did heretofore with the Israelites, to lead them step by step through the wilderness to the land of promise. Happy will you be, if you suffer God to take possession of you, and to do in you what he pleases, not according to your inclinations, but his designs.

On Mortification.

GOD calls us to a daily and hourly exercise of mortification. And, perhaps, it is a very considerable one to avoid every thing that is prejudicial to our health. But God regulates all in the heart he once possesses; he accustoms it gently to the prescribed rule, deprives the will of a certain inflexibility, and removes a dangerous confidence in our own judgment; he blunts the edge of the desires, cools the passions, detaches the man not only from outward objects, but even from himself, and renders him gentle, amiable, simple, lowly in his own eyes, and ready to will or not will, according to his good pleasure. Let this be our state, as it is the will of God, and let us not resist him.

That mortification, that comes from the hand of God, is more profitable for us than those sensible fervours in prayer, which are according to our own taste and inclination.

Very frequently those mortifications which consist in a constant resignation to the strokes of Providence, are more advantageous to us, than the greatest artificial austerities which render us more singular, and tempt us to a vain complacency in ourselves. He who constantly accepts every thing that happens in the order of Providence, and seeks nothing but what it gives, will find that every day will make him a partaker of the cross of Christ. These crosses are as truly the effect of Providence, as any other thing the most

essential to our life : they are our daily bread, which God never suffers us to want, and are frequently the purest mortifications zealous souls can suffer, as they prevent their mortifying themselves according to their own choice, and call them to a perpetual state of such mortification as is suitable to the designs of God.

When we are not resigned to the humiliations of Providence, there is great reason to fear that there is too much of illusion in those austerities which our fervour inclines us to seek : this fervour is often deceitful, and I believe it is expedient to try our souls by their fidelity to daily and providential crosses.

On Self-renunciation.

THE foundation of all our malady is a blind self-love, which becomes a species of idolatry. All that we love outwardly, we love only for ourselves. We must not be deceived by those generous friendships in which we appear to forget ourselves, and think only of the interests of those to whom we are attached. When, in the commerce of friendship, we have no sordid interests in view, we pursue others which are more latent, more delicate, and more laudable in the opinion of the world ; but these are so much the more dangerous and capable of corrup-

ting us, as they afford a finer nourishment to self-love.

Let us conclude, that the love of God alone can detach us from ourselves. If the powerful hand of God did not support us, we should not know where to set our foot to take one step out of ourselves.

Nothing is a more effectual bar to receiving this grace of self-renunciation than a philosophical pride, and self-love, disguised under the mask of a worldly generosity. The more we have by nature of candour, complacency in virtue, delicacy of sentiment, a taste for probity, and disinterested friendship, the more we ought to srive to get loose from self, and fear the being delighted with those natural gifts.

As it may be enquired what this self-renunciation is, in some other respects, I will add, we are easily convinced that it is our duty to renounce all criminal pleasures, unjust acquisitions, and evident vanities: but it is not so easy to see the necessity of renouncing wealth which is lawfully acquired, the sweets of an innocent and reputable life; and, finally, the honours which are the consequence of a good reputation.

What makes it difficult for us to understand that we should renounce these things is, that we ought not absolutely to reject them, but should use them soberly, suitable to that state in which Providence has placed us.

The comforts of a calm and peaceful life, are necessary to support us under the difficulties annexed to every state: with regard to honours, we should have respect to decency; and to supply our necessities, should preserve the wealth we possess. How then, it may be said, do we renounce those things, while we employ our care to preserve them? The true way is, without anxiety to do all we can to preserve them, that we may make a sober use of them, without setting our affections on them.

Thus the way to renounce things in themselves evil, is to reject them with horror; but the way to renounce good things, is to use them with moderation as occasion requires, always studying to retrench those imaginary wants, with which our avaricious nature would pamper itself.

Observe, that we must not only renounce evil, but good things; for Jesus Christ has said without restriction, "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33.

We must renounce those that are most dear to us, and whom we are in duty bound to love: this renunciation consists in loving them only for God, enjoying the consolation of their friendship occasionally, and with sobriety, being ready to part with them when it is the will of God, and never seeking in them the true repose of the heart. This is the chastity of true Christian friendship, which seeks the heavenly spouse in a mortal

and terrestrial friend. In this manner we use the creatures and the world, *as if we used them not*, according to St. Paul's expression: we desire to use what God bestows, and love them so far as it is his will we should; restraining our hearts in the use of them, and reserving our affections for a more proper object.

It is in this sense that Jesus Christ would have us renounce father, mother, brethren, sisters, and friends. If at the bottom of our heart we are attached to any creatures more than to God, our heart is no longer worthy of him.

After having renounced all outward things, then comes the last sacrifice, which is that of all within us; and that is in reality renouncing ourselves. We are as much captivated with our understanding, our wisdom, and our virtue, as a woman of this world is with her beauty; we regard them with the same complacency; we delight in being thought wise, temperate, and free from the intoxications that disorder others; and by this means we become intoxicated with the vanity of not appearing to be so in prosperity, and of renouncing, by a courageous moderation, all that the world most prizes.

O how dangerous is this state! How subtile is its poison! How certainly shall we offend God, if we resign our hearts to this refined self-love! We must then renounce all enjoyment of, and all natural complacency in our own wisdom and virtue.

Remember, that the more excellent the gifts of God are, the more jealous he is of them. He desires we should be attached to him alone, and not to his gifts, be they ever so excellent, only so far as is according to his design, to unite us the more intimately to himself. Whoever regards with complacency, and as his own property, the graces he has received from God, converts them into poison.

Let us beware then of appropriating to ourselves, not only outward things, as our talents, and the favour we stand in with men, but also the internal gifts of God. The goodness of our own will is not less the free gift of God, than our being and life which come from him. We must live then as debtors; all that is in us, and all that we are, is but a loan from God, to be used according to the intention of the lender; and never to be considered as at our own disposal, and as a possession that belongs to us.

It is this spirit which appropriates nothing to itself, and this simplicity with regard to ourselves to follow the motions of God, in which consists the solid renunciation of ourselves. And when this desire is in the bottom of the heart, God himself leads us as it were by the hand, and exercises this renunciation in the daily occurrences of life.

It is not by painful reflections and continual contentions that we renounce ourselves; but by abstaining from all self-seeking, and

being willing to be as God pleases, that we lose ourselves in him.

We see in ourselves many real good intentions, but we should be terrified did we perceive to how many things we are still attached. It is not indeed wilfully and premeditately that we have these attachments; we say not in ourselves, I have them, and I desire to have them; but, notwithstanding, we really have them, and are sometimes afraid of digging too deep, lest we should discover them: we are sensible of our weakness, and dare not proceed.

Sometimes also we are willing to examine ourselves to the bottom, that we may sacrifice all to God; but this is only a fit of zeal, like that of Peter's, when he said, *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.* And afterwards was terrified by the question of a servant maid.

We seek to discover all our defects; and God directs us in this enquiry. He refuses us a light too strong for our state of grace: he suffers us not to perceive in our heart, that which it is not yet the season to deprive us of. It is a wonderful procedure of the Divine goodness, never to solicit us inwardly to forsake aught that we have hitherto loved and possessed, without suitably enlightening us; and that his light never directs us to make any sacrifice which he does not give us strength to perform.

We may rest in peace, provided we are faithful to what we know. Whatever else

is necessary for us, God will reveal in his own time. It is in mercy that God thus conceals from us such things as we are not yet able to bear. We have a certain impatient zeal for our own perfection, which is desirous for immediately seeing and sacrificing all: but an humble confidence, while under the hand of God, is more useful towards accomplishing the death of self, than all our uneasy efforts to advance our own perfection.

Let us then be content to follow the light of the present moment, without looking further. It is our daily bread, which God gives us only for one day; it is like the manna in the wilderness; and he that would gather a double portion, and make provision for the ensuing day, grossly deceives himself. It will corrupt in his hands, and he will have no more of it to feed on, than he who gathers for one day.

It is this child-like dependance on God, to which he would fain bend our spirits. He dispenses his internal light, as a prudent mother assigns to her daughter the task she is to perform, and as soon as it is finished, allots her another.

Virtue.

THE practice of virtue does not consist in words; they can never suffice to attain the kingdom of God. It is to be attain-

ed only by a perpetual violence, which we must offer to ourselves; a violence, when the torrent of the world is to be resisted, which prevents our doing good, after having so frequently been the occasion of our doing evil; a violence, when we are in part to renounce what is necessary, that we may not be deceived, in too readily imagining that we have relinquished what is superfluous; a violence, when we are to mortify our spirits, not thinking we have done sufficient when we have mortified our bodies; a violence, for being perfectly contented in whatever state we are, without desiring more conveniences, more honour, more health, or any other company, not even that of good people. Lastly, a violence, to arrive at that degree of indifference, which is necessary for a Christian, who has no will but that of his Creator, to whom he leaves the success of all his affairs, though he employs himself in them; who acts suitably to his condition, but does so without anxiety; who takes pleasure in looking up to God, and does not fear the being retarded by him; who hopes that the eye of God will be upon him for the correction of his faults; and who peacefully relies on his mercy, with regard to the punishment to them.

Salvation.

SALVATION is not to be attained merely by ceasing to do ill; we must also add to it the practice of that which is good. The kingdom of heaven is too great a treasure to be bestowed on the timorous slave, who only abstains from evil because he is afraid to commit it. God desires to have children that should love him for his goodness, and not slaves, who only serve him through the dread of his power. We must then love him, and consequently do all that true love inspires.

Many apparently well-meaning people deceive themselves on this subject: they are jealous of their liberty, and afraid of losing it by devoting themselves too much to piety: but they should consider, *that they are not their own*, 1 Cor. vi. 19. but God's, who has created them solely for himself, and ought to rule them as he pleases.

Against Temptations.

THERE are two things to be done with regard to temptations. The first is to be guided by our inward light, in retrenching, without delay, as far as we are at liberty, all that may nourish or awaken the temptation. I say, as far as we are at liberty; because it does not always depend upon us to avoid

what excites to evil. What is incident to the state in which Providence has placed us, is not supposed to be in our own power.

The second rule is, when tempted, always to turn to God, and not disquiet ourselves by considering whether we have not already in part consented, so as to interrupt the immediate tendency of our heart to God. By examining too closely whether we have not been guilty of some infidelity, we are in danger of being again involved in the temptation. The shortest and surest method is to act like a child at the breast, who, if it is shewn a frightful monster, starts back with horror, and sinks into the bosom of its mother, that it may no longer perceive it.

The practice of the presence of God, is of all others the most sovereign remedy; it comforts, supports, and calms us; we must not be surprised even at the most shameful temptations. *My son*, says the son of Sirach, *if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.* Eccles. xi. 1.

Every thing in this world is temptation.—Crosses tempt us, by irritating our pride, and prosperity by flattering it. Our whole life is a continual warfare, but a warfare in which Jesus Christ fights for us.

We must march on, though temptations surround us; as a traveller, surprised by a storm, wraps himself up in his cloak, and proceeds notwithstanding the foulness of the weather.

With regard to what is past, when we have satisfied our conscience by a sincere repentance, evinced by the actual forsaking of our sins, we have nothing to do but to cast all our iniquities into the abyss of mercy.

When an involuntary remembrance of past troubles occurs, we should remain confounded, and as it were nothing in the presence of God, peacefully bearing in his adorable sight, all the shame and ignominy of our sins, without seeking, cherishing, or recalling the too dangerous remembrance of them.

On Sorrow.

WITH regard to such a kind of sadness as depresses and contracts the heart, there are two rules, the observation of which seems to me of great importance. The first is, to remove this sorrow by such means as Providence has furnished us with: for example, not to burthen ourselves with laborious business, so as to sink under a load greater than we are able to bear; to spare not only the powers of the body, but likewise those of the mind; to set apart hours for prayer, for reading, for enlivening our spirits by pious, nay even by cheerful conversation, so as at once to recreate both our bodies and minds, suitably to our necessity.

We should also have some wise and discrete person, to whom we might unburden

our hearts of every thing, except the secrets of another; for this is a comfort that peculiarly eases an heavy heart.

Troubles, too long retained in the heart, frequently burst it; whereas, if we could vent them, we should see they were not deserving of all the bitterness they caused.

The second rule is, peacefully to bear all involuntary emotions of sorrow. Inward discouragements expedite our progress in the road of faith, provided they do not stop us, and that the slothfulness of the soul does not yield to this sorrow, which, if permitted, would conquer all its powers. A step taken in this state, is more valuable than a thousand taken when the soul is in a more sweet and comfortable disposition.

This sensible courage, which renders every thing easy, which does and suffers all things, is often deceitful, as it nourishes self-confidence, and a certain elevation of heart. This courage, though sometimes wonderfully edifying to the world, nourishes within us a secret satisfaction, and inward testimony, which is a subtile poison.

We relish our own virtue, are delighted with it, we would possess it, and are pleased with its strength.

A weak and humble soul, who finds no resource in itself, who fears, is troubled, and sorrowful; who cries out, like our Lord on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* is much more purified, more dead to all the desires of self, than those brave

souls, who enjoy in peace the fruits of their virtue.—Happy soul that is thus bruised by God, and whom he deprives of all strength in itself, that it may be supported only by him; who is sensible of its own poverty, and is content; who bears, besides outward crosses, this great inward one of the despondency of the heart, without which all others avail but little.

On Dejection and Dissipation.

THERE are two things which especially disquiet; the one is to avoid a certain dissipation, the other to bear up against dejection and melancholy. As to dissipation it will never be remedied by strained reflections. Do not hope to do the work of grace by the springs and ingenuities of nature. Be content to give up thy will without reserve to God, and never regard any state as grievous, but accept it with resignation to the Divine Providence.

Be not troubled that the sensible presence of God is often withdrawn; content thyself in the course of the day, with a general view of God, so that if at any time thou art asked, what is the disposition of thy heart, it would be true to say, it aims at God, though some other objects might outwardly require its attention. With regard to the wanderings of

thy imagination which are unavoidable, be not too much grieved at them. We often distract ourselves by the fear of being distracted, and afterwards by the regret of having been so.

We should say to a man, who spent his time in considering the falls he might possibly meet with instead of proceeding on his journey, Go on, go on: I say the same to thee; Go on, without stopping or looking behind. *Walk*, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, *that ye may abound more and more.* 1 Thess. iv. 1. The aboundings in the love of God will rectify mistakes much more effectually, than thy disquiet and uneasy returns to self.

How we ought to watch over ourselves.

WITH regard to watching over ourselves, the following appears to me to be the best manner of practising this vigilance. The wise and diligent traveller always watches over his steps, and has his eyes upon that part of the road which is immediately before him: he is not incessantly turning back to count his steps, and examine the road he has passed; this would be losing that time in which he ought to proceed on his journey.

A soul whom God really leads by the hand, ought indeed to watch over its way, but then it should be with a simple and tranquil vigi-

lance, confined to the present moment, and without any uneasiness proceeding from self-love. This vigilance is a continual attention to the will of God to fulfil it every moment, and not a return to ourselves that we may be assured of our state, which God would have us ignorant of. Wherefore the Psalmist says, *Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.* Psalm xxv. 15.

Observe that to guide his feet aright, in the way where the net is laid, instead of casting his eyes down to the ground to examine all his steps, he lifts them up unto the Lord. We can never watch better over ourselves, than when we walk with God always present before our eyes, as he directed Abraham to do. And in effect, to what should all our watchfulness tend, but to follow step by step the will of God? He who conforms himself to it in all things, truly watches over himself, and every thing is sanctified to him.

On the inward teaching of God's Holy Spirit.

IT is certain from Scripture, Rom. viii. John xiv. that the spirit of God dwelleth in us, that it acts there, that it there prays without ceasing, that it there asks for us what we ourselves know not how to ask for, that it animates us, speaks to us in silence, sug-

gests all truth to us, and unites us so to itself, that we become one spirit with God. *He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit.* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

This is what the teachers who are furthest removed from the inward life cannot avoid acknowledging. Yet notwithstanding these principles, in their practice, they aim at supposing, that the outward written law, or at most a certain light, derived from Scripture and reasoning, is what inwardly enlightens us, and that afterwards our reason acts of itself from that instruction. They esteem not enough that inward teacher, which is the Holy Spirit, and which effects all in us. He is the soul of our soul: we could not form a thought or desire but through him. Alas, how great then is our blindness! we esteem ourselves as if alone in this inward sanctuary; and, quite the contrary, God is more intimately there than we ourselves.

Perhaps it will be said, What then are we inspired? Yes, without doubt. Without the actual inspiration of the spirit of grace, we could neither do, will, or believe any good. We are then always inspired, but we incessantly stifle this inspiration. God ceases not to speak, but the noise and hurry of things without, and our passions within, deafen, and hinder us from attending to him. We must silence every creature, we must silence ourselves also, to hear, in a profound stillness of the soul, this inexpressible voice of Christ, the bridegroom of our souls.

We must be very attentive, for it is a soft and still voice, which is not to be heard but by those who listen to it alone. O how seldom does the soul keep silence enough to let God speak! The lowest whisper of our vain desires, or self-love attentive to itself, disturbs all the words of the Spirit of God. We hear plain enough that he asks for something; but we know not what he says, and are often glad, not to understand it. The smallest reserve, the least regard for self, the least fear of understanding too plainly, that God asks more than we are willing to give him, disturbs this inward voice. Shall we be surprised then, if so many, even pious persons, but still full of amusements, vain desires, false wisdom and confidence in their own virtues, cannot hear it, and regard this inward voice as a fanatical chimera. Alas, what would they be at by their disdainful reasonings? To what purpose would the outward word of teachers be, and even of the Scriptures, if it were not for the inward voice of the holy Spirit, which gives them all their efficacy? The outward word of the gospel itself, without this living efficacious word within, would be but an empty sound. It is the letter *that alone* killeth, and the spirit *that alone* giveth life. O word, O eternal and all powerful word of the Father, it is thou that speakest in the bottom of our souls! That word which proceeded out of the mouth of our Saviour during the days of

his mortal life, would not have had so much virtue, nor been productive of such fruits on earth, but because it was animated by this word of life, which is the word itself. This made Peter say, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* John vi. 68.

It is not then only the outward law of the gospel, which God shews us inwardly by the light of reason and faith; it is his Spirit that speaks, that moves us, that operates in us, and animates us: so that it is this spirit, which does in us all the good we do, as it is our soul that animates our body, and regulates all its motions. It is then true that we are continually inspired, and that we do not live the life of grace, but so far as we partake of this inward inspiration. But, O my God, few Christians are sensible of this; for there are very few, who by their voluntary dissipation, or their resistance, do not destroy it. This inspiration instils into us obedience, patience, sweetness, humility, and all the other virtues necessary to every Christian. It is an invitation in the bottom of the soul to obedience and resignation, suitable to the designs of the love of God: it contains not in itself any presumptive or illusive snare: on the contrary, it preserves us in the hands of God, attributing every thing to grace, without destroying our liberty; and leaving nothing to pride or imagination.

These principles being laid down, it must be acknowledged that God *speaks incessantly in us*. (Thomas a Kempis, Lib. 3. C. iii. Sect. 3.) He speaks in impenitent sinners; but they being deafened by the noise of the world, and their passions, cannot hear him: his word is to them as a tale. He speaks also in penitent sinners; these feel a remorse of conscience, and that remorse is the voice of God, which reproaches them inwardly for their sins. When these sinners are effectually touched, they find no difficulty in understanding this secret voice; for it is that which smites them so sharply. It is in them the two-edged sword St. Paul speaks of; it goes to *the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit*. Heb. iv. 12. God causes himself to be felt, tasted, and obeyed; they hear this soft voice, which conveys into the bottom of their heart a tender reproach, and by this the heart is broken. This is true and pure contrition.

God speaks likewise in enlightened and learned persons, whose outward lives are regular in all things, and who are apparently adorned with many virtues: but very frequently these persons, being full of themselves and their own knowledge, hearken too much to themselves to hear God. They reason upon every thing; they do every thing upon principles of human wisdom and prudential rules, which would be better done through the channel of simplicity, and docility to the Spirit of God. These

persons sometimes seem to have more goodness than others; and they have it in a certain degree; but it is an adulterated goodness. They are masters of themselves, and would always be so according to the capacity of their reason; they would be always in the hand of their own council: they are strong and great in their own eyes. O my God, "*I thank thee*, with Jesus Christ, that thou "hast hid thy secrets from the wise, and "prudent, and hast revealed them unto "babes." It is only children thou art familiar with. Thou treatest others after their own way. They desire knowledge and splendid virtues; thou givest them shining parts, and makest them great. But this is not the best portion. There is something more reserved for thy dear children. They repose themselves with John, on thy bosom. As for those great ones who always dread stooping and becoming little, thou lettest them remain in their greatness; they shall never taste thy caresses and familiar intercourse.

I have often remarked, that a sinner of small natural understanding, when he becomes sensibly affected with the love of God, and a sense of his errors, is more disposed to hear this inward language of the spirit of grace, than some enlightened and learned persons, who are grown old in their own wisdom. God, who seeks only to communicate himself, finds not room in those souls, full of themselves, and so long nourished by their

own wisdom and virtues: but he converses freely with the simple, and as the scriptures say, *His secret is with the righteous.* Prov. iii. 32.

It is very uncommon for such as are entirely devoted to God to fall into deliberate sins. Small faults appear great in our eyes, in proportion as the pure light of God increases in our souls; as the rising sun discovers to us with more exactness and clearness those objects which, during the night, we could only see confusedly. The increase of inward light will discover many imperfections, in a far worse light than they have hitherto appeared. Many miseries will be seen to flow out of the heart, which were little suspected to be found there.

A soul that depends on God alone, is not surprised at the sight of its own wretchedness; it is contented to see that it can do nothing, and that God alone can do all.

One important rule is to abstain from sin; let us beware of resisting or extinguishing the Spirit of God, who inwardly warns us of it. Faults, committed through precipitation or weakness, are trifles in comparison of those where we are deaf to the secret voice of the blessed Spirit, which speaks in the bottom of our hearts.

When any thing is required from thee that seems impossible to nature, say to thyself, Nothing is impossible to God.

We must not be discouraged either by the experience of our weakness, or the dis-

ike of a busy life if we are engaged in it; it is a mercy from God that we bewail this perturbation; and the bewailing it is an antidote which prevents its corrupting our hearts.

When we stumble, or even fall, let us think of nothing but rising again, and renewing our course.

Be discouraged at nothing, but support thyself with humility in inequalities, weaknesses, and troubles: bless God for the progress others make in virtue, as sincerely as if thou hadst made it thyself.

On Fidelity in small Matters.

IT is in piety, as in the economy of temporal goods: we shall be sooner ruined by the neglect of trifles than by great expenses. Whoever knows how to make small matters turn to the best account, will, in spiritual as well as temporal affairs, amass great riches. The greatest sums are only small ones accumulated and carefully collected. He who lets nothing be lost will soon grow rich.

Besides, we should consider that God does not so much regard our actions, as the motive of love which incites us to perform them, and the compliance he requires of our will. Men judge of our actions only by what appears outwardly, God accounts as nothing,

all that is in them most glaring in the eyes of men.

What he would have, is a pure intention, a will ready for all things, and pliant in his hands, with a sincere detachment from ourselves. All this is often exercised with less danger to our pride, and in a way that tries us more severely on common occasions, than on the most extraordinary. Nay, we often value a trifle more than a matter seemingly of great importance; we should, perhaps, find more difficulty to renounce a favourite amusement, than to bestow a large sum in alms.

We the more easily deceive ourselves in small things, as we believe them innocent, and imagine ourselves less attached to them. Nevertheless, we may easily perceive by our concern when it pleases God to deprive us of them, how excessive and inexcusable our enjoyment of, and attachment to them was. Besides, if we are negligent on small occasions, we shall often give offence to our family, our domestics, and the world. They cannot imagine that we are sincerely pious, when in particular instances they perceive us remiss and irregular. What reason have they to believe, that we should, without hesitation, make the greatest sacrifices, when they see that we decline the smallest?

But what is of all other things the most dangerous is, that this neglect of trivial matters accustoms the soul to infidelity. It grieves the holy Spirit, we become aban-

doned to our own will, and regard as nothing an offence against God. On the contrary, perfect love esteems nothing little, every thing that can either please or displease God seems important to it. Not that perfect love fills the soul with uneasiness and scruples, but it sets no bounds to its fidelity, it works simply with God; and as it does not embarrass itself with things that God requires not of it, so it never hesitates upon what he does require, whether it be great or whether it be small. It is not then by uneasiness that we become faithful, but by a sentiment of love, which is free from the fears and disquiets of a scrupulous soul. We are, as it were, drawn on by the love of God, nor do we wish to act otherwise than we do. Whilst God urges the soul, with regard to the smallest particulars, and seems to deprive it of all liberty, it finds itself enlarged, and enjoys a profound peace in him. O how happy is the soul in this state! As for those who have naturally less exactness, they ought to observe a more inviolable law with regard to small matters. They are tempted to despise them; to count them as nothing; they do not enough consider the consequence of them; they do not represent to themselves the insensible progress of the passions; they even forget their own fatal experiences. They choose rather to promise themselves an imaginary steadiness, and to confide in their own courage, which has so often deceived

them, than to be subject to a continual fidelity. It is a trifle, they say. Yes, it is a trifle, but such a trifle as is every thing to you; a trifle to which you are so attached as to refuse to part with it to God; a trifle, which, in order to excuse the refusal of, you despise in words, but in reality such a trifle as you keep back from God, and as will prove your destruction. It is not a greatness of soul which induces us to despise small things: on the contrary, it is by having too limited views, that we regard any thing as small, which is attended with such important consequences. The more difficulty we find in attending to small things, the more we ought to fear our negligence, and mistrust ourselves. He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.

Fear not this continual attention to small things. At first some steadiness and courage will be necessary; but it is a self-denial you have occasion for, that will constitute your peace and security; without it you cannot have either. God will by degrees render this state sweet and easy. True love is attentive without pain or contention.

On Transitory Motions, on Fidelity, and Simplicity.

WHENEVER a motion of vain complacency, self-confidence, haughtiness, and impatience at the weakness of others, or at the troubles of our own state, is perceived, we should let all these things fall as a stone to the bottom of the sea, and must defer acting till we are in such a disposition as recollection ought to put us in.

If, through the surprise of passion, any malignant emotion of nature should escape us, we must not be discouraged; but still pursuing our course, bear in peace before God the humiliation of our fault; by the inward confusion it occasions, it will serve to promote the death of self, to prevent the appropriation of the gifts of God, and to cause us to consider ourselves as nothing before him.

The principal thing is to renounce our own wisdom by a simple conduct, and to be ready to sacrifice the favour, esteem, and approbation of the world, whenever God so conducts as to render it expedient. We are not to meddle with such things as God requires not of us, nor needlessly expose ourselves, by asserting truths which well meaning people are not yet able to bear.

When God gives the signal, we must part with and hazard all to follow him. To hesitate, to stop, to faint at what he would have us do, to dread the exposing ourselves too

much, to be willing to shelter ourselves from all disgusts and contradictions, to seek plausible excuses to dispense with our performing certain good actions, attended with difficulty and trouble, when we are convinced in our conscience that God expects them from us, and that he has placed us in a state to accomplish them ; this would be to retake ourselves, after having devoted ourselves to God.

Beware of this infidelity. Nothing is so terrible as inwardly to resist God ; it is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which Jesus Christ assures us, *shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* Matt. xii. 32. This resistance insensibly extinguishes the spirit of grace in the heart.

We are not to judge of the Virtues, which outwardly appear in ourselves or others, according to Human Ideas.

IF we are surprised at the weakness and corruption of men, it is a sign we have not dived deep enough into the miseries of human nature in general, and of our own in particular. If we expected nothing good from men, nothing that is evil in them would astonish us. Our astonishment proceeds then from our regarding humanity as something, whereas it is nothing, and worse than

nothing. The tree ought not to surprise us, when it bears its natural fruits. But all our admiration is due to Jesus Christ, into whom we were grafted, as St. Paul says, when we were wild grapes, and instead of our former bitter fruits, produce the delicious fruits of virtue. Be not deceived by the most specious appearances of human virtue, which is poisoned by vain complacency and self-confidence. *That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.* Luke xvi. 15.

Let us cease to judge of virtues and vices, acording to our own opinion which self-love has depraved, and according to our false idea of greatness. There is nothing great, but that which abases itself before the sole and sovereign greatness. The bias of our heart makes us endeavour to be great; but God would humble and lessen us in his hands. Let us suffer him to do so.

Many people, who seek God, are often full of troubles; not that God authorizes their imperfections; but because their imperfections retard them, and prevent their advancing to him in the shortest way. They cannot advance quickly, for they are burthened with themselves, and a long train of superfluities. Some are ignorant of their own hearts, and imagine themselves attached to nothing, though they are attached to every thing. They are flattered by their own reasons, while they weigh those of others by the weights of the sanctuary; and by this means,

while they talk of nothing but righteousness and fidelity, they become really unjust.

They are prejudiced against such as they are jealous of: this jealousy, which conceals itself in the most inward recesses of the heart, exaggerates the smallest defects; they are full of their neighbours failings, and cannot be silent with regard to them. Hence proceed artful criticisms and ill offices, which they are guilty of, without being intentionally so.

There are faults committed through passion and frailty, that we easily comprehend are not incompatible with sincere piety; but we do not as clearly understand, that other faults, which are the consequence of illusion, self-love, and custom, are compatible with a sincere intention to please God. It is true, this intention is neither pure nor strong enough; however, though weak and imperfect, it is sincere within its own limits. A person is covetous, but he perceives it not; it is hid under specious pretences; he calls it economy, a care to avoid waste, a prudential foresight. Another is envious, but perceives not this malignant passion which conceals itself; it dare not appear, the sight of it would be productive of too much confusion; it therefore disguises itself, and sometimes deceives the person that is troubled with it, more effectually than those who examine it with critical eyes. A third is full of asperity, difficult to be pleas-

ed, and apt to take offence on all occasions: all this is the effect of self-interestedness; but this interestedness adorns itself with many specious reasonings. I conclude, therefore, that some good people have imperfections mixed with their good will; because their will, although good, is still weak, divided, and retarded, by the secret springs of self-love.

Our very ardour against the defects of others, is in itself a great defect. That disdain at the misery of others, is a misery that does not sufficiently know itself. When shall we regard as nothing all that is in ourselves or others? God is all good, the creature all evil.

The light of God alone can, by its increasing in us, enable us to penetrate the abyss of evil, which is in the heart of every man. But while it shows the depth of this evil, it shows also the good that God blends with it. It is a mixture of good and evil that we can scarce persuade ourselves of. The servants would separate them, but the master of the family says, *Let both grow together till the time of harvest.* Matt. xiii. 30.

The chief thing is, not to be discouraged at so sad a spectacle, nor to carry our distrust too far. People, who are naturally open and confident, are more dejected and distrustful than others, when they are by experience discouraged from being so. There is much to guard against from this quarter,

especially when our situation exposes to our view the miseries of the human race, envy, jealousy, rash judgments, &c. represent numberless innocent things as evil, and exaggerate many slight imperfections. These things unite to attack and weary our patience, our confidence, and charity; but let us not be moved, God reserves to himself faithful servants, who, if they do not all, do a great deal in comparison of the rest of the corrupted world, and considering their fallen nature.

They see their imperfections, and are humbled at them; they fight against them; they correct them, it is true, but slowly; but in the end they do correct them; they praise God for what they have done, and condemn themselves for what they have left undone.

If we are convinced that God ought to be served in a better manner, then, without hesitation, or setting any bounds to our desires, let us aspire after this true worship, where the creature has nothing left for it. O that this blessed state was ours! Far from impatiently bearing with those who are not in it, the vast extent of our hearts would render us indulgent and compassionate to all the weaknesses of their contracted hearts. The more perfect we are ourselves, the more apt we are to make allowances for the imperfections of others. The Pharisees could not endure the publicans and harlots, with whom Jesus Christ conversed with so much mildness and lenity. When we are no long-

er attached to self, we enter into that greatness of God which nothing wearies or discourages. When shall we attain this liberty and enlargement of heart! He who no longer lives to himself, is, through God, every thing to his neighbour: he who is still in himself, lives neither to God nor his neighbour, but in a small degree.

May peace, truth, simplicity, liberty, pure faith, and a disinterested love, make us a perfect burnt-offering.

On the Advantages of Silence and Recollection.

WE should endeavour to be as silent as the decency of human intercourse will permit.—Silence produces the presence of God, prevents many offensive words, and suppresses much raillery, and the passing many dangerous judgments on our neighbour.

Silence humbles the spirit, and by degrees detaches it from the world: it will supply our wants in the perplexities we experience. Provided we never speak unprofitably, there will be many vacant moments, even in the midst of company, in which we are detained against our will.

We wish for liberty to pray to God, and God who knows best what is needful for us, mortifies us by placing us in a state of perplexity and subjection.

The mortification that comes by the direction of God, will be more beneficial than the delights of prayer, made according to our own choice and fancy. So much retirement is not necessary in order to love God: when he affords us leisure, we must take it, and profit by it: till then, let us exercise our faith, by firmly believing that whatever he gives is best for us.

Let us suffer patiently whatever comes across. God deals with us according to our wants; and as we are sensible of the truths of religion, it is more requisite to be mortified than to receive new lights.

A state of dissipation is to be feared, but this may be avoided by silence. If we are faithful to remain silent when it is not necessary for us to speak, God will not suffer us to be dissipated by useful conversation.

These mortifications, which we choose ourselves, do not destroy self-love so effectually as those which God daily distributes to us. Those have nothing in them which can support our self-will: and as they come immediately from a merciful Providence, they bring with them a grace proportioned to all our necessities. We have, therefore, nothing to do, but daily to resign ourselves to God, who carries us in his arms, as a tender mother does her child: let us believe, hope, and love, with all the simplicity of children: in all our necessities, let us turn our eyes towards our heavenly Father: behold what he says in the Scriptures, *Can a*

woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Isaiah xlix. 15.

On the Advantages of the Cross.

WE find it difficult to be convinced of the mercy of God in loading those he loves with crosses. Why, say they, should he delight in our sufferings? Cannot he make us good without making us miserable? Yes, without doubt, God could do so; for nothing is impossible to him. He holds in his Almighty hands the hearts of the children of men, and turneth them as he pleaseth. But God, who has power to save us without the cross, has not willed it so: in like manner as he has willed that men should arrive at maturity by degrees, and first pass through all the distresses and weaknesses of childhood, rather than be born in the full strength of riper years. In this he is the Master; our part is to be silent, and adore his profound wisdom, although we do not comprehend it. Thus much we clearly see, that we cannot become truly good, but in proportion as we become humble, and detached from self, so as to render all to God.

The operation of grace which detaches us from ourselves, and takes away self-love, must, without a miracle of grace, be pain-

ful. God does not in the operations of grace, any more than in those of nature, daily work miracles.

It would be as great a miracle in grace to see a person full of himself, become in a moment dead to all self-interest and sensibility, as to see the child that went to bed last night, rise this morning as tall and strong as a man of thirty. God conceals his operations in the course of grace, as well as nature, under an insensible succession of events, and by this means keeps us in the obscurity of faith. He not only accomplishes his work by degrees, but by means the most simple and suitable for its success; that the means appearing suitable to the end, human wisdom may attribute the success to second causes, and so the finger of God be less observed; otherwise all that God effects would be evidently a perpetual miracle, which would destroy that faith in which he would have us live.

It is to preserve us in this obscurity of faith, with regard to the operation of grace, that God renders it tedious and painful. He makes use of the inconstancy and ingratitude of the creatures, and the disgusts and disappointments we experience in prosperity, to detach us from ourselves, and that deceitful prosperity. He prevents our being proud of ourselves by the experience of our weakness and corruption, which is manifest by our numberless relapses.

We desire to be suddenly consumed by the flames of pure love; but this would cost

us scarcely any thing: it is the excess of our self-love that makes us desirous to become thus perfect in a moment, and at so cheap a rate.

Of what then can we complain? Our evil is that we are all attached to the creatures, and still more to ourselves. God prepares a succession of events, which by degrees draw us from the creatures, and in the end from ourselves. This operation is painful; but it is our corruption which renders it necessary, and occasions all the pain that we suffer. If our flesh was sound, the surgeon would make no incision in it: he only cuts in proportion to the depth of the wound, and so far as the flesh is corrupted: if the operation is painful to us, it is because of the extremity of our disorder. Is it cruelty in the surgeon to cut to the quick? No, quite the reverse; it is affection, it is judgment; he would thus treat his only son. God deals with us after the same manner. His fatherly heart does not seek to vex us: but he cuts us to the quick, in order to heal the ulcer in our hearts. He must take from us what we love too much; what we love with an irregular and faulty love; what we so love as to be prejudicial to the love of him. And what is the consequence of this treatment? He makes us cry, like children, when a knife is taken from them, with which they were playing, and might have hurt themselves. We weep and discourage ourselves; we are ready to murmur against God, as children that

are vexed with their mothers. But God suffers us to cry, and saves us. Even when he appears to overwhelm us, it is for our advantage, and to prevent the injury we would do to ourselves. What we lament the loss of here, would have made us lament eternally. What we esteemed lost, was really lost when we imagined we possessed it. God has secured it, that he may speedily restore it to us in an approaching eternity.

He deprives us of things we love, that we may love them with a pure, solid, and temperate love; and that he may secure to us the everlasting enjoyment of them in his bosom, so as to do us an hundred fold more good, than we ourselves know how to desire in them.

In the creation of the universe, his wisdom measured and weighed the smallest atom. It is he that each moment produces and renews the breath of life which animates us; it is he who numbers our days, and holds in his Omnipotent hands the keys of the grave, to open or to shut it.

What strikes us most, is as nothing in the sight of God; a little more, or a little less of life, is a difference which disappears in the presence of his eternity. Of what importance is it whether this weak vessel, this body of clay, should be reduced to ashes a little sooner, or a little later?

O how contracted are our views of things! We are alarmed to see a person die in the

flower of his youth. We cry out, What a loss is this! But to whom is the loss? What does he lose that dies? A few years of vanity and illusion, to be spent in danger of eternal death. God takes him away from the midst of his iniquities, and hastens to snatch him from this corrupted world, and his own weakness. What do they lose who most loved him? They lose the poison of a worldly felicity; they lose the forgetfulness of God and themselves into which they were plunged; or rather, they gain by the efficacy of the cross, the blessedness which comes from detachment. The same stroke that saves him who dies, prepares others (whom their sorrows detach from themselves) courageously to work out their salvation.

What difference is there now between two persons who lived an hundred years ago? One of them survived the other twenty years; but now they are both dead. Their separation, which at that time appeared so long, does not appear so to us, and was in truth but a short separation. Some regard themselves as if they were immortal, or at least as if they had many years before them. O the folly of human wisdom! Those we see dying every day, follow close upon those who are already dead. The man who this day sets out on a journey, would not think himself at a great distance from him who set off but two days before him. Life glides away like a torrent. The past is but as a dream; the present, when we think we enjoy it, flies

from us, and sinks into the abyss of the past; the future will be of the same nature, and will as rapidly pass by us. The days, the months, the years, like the waves of the sea, flow one after another : in a few moments, in a very few I say, and all shall be ended.

It is true we suffer, but then it is by the will of God, in order to purify us, and render us worthy of him. The world smiled upon us, and this prosperity poisoned our hearts. Would we spend all our days, even to the moment of our death, in that softness, that delicacy, that vain joy, that splendor, that triumph of pride, that relish for the world which is at enmity with Jesus Christ, and that distance from the cross, which alone ought to sanctify us ?

The world will frown upon us ; it will ungratefully forget us, and cease to acknowledge us ; it will consider us as in the class of those things which no longer exist. Well, and are we to be surprised that the world continues to be like itself, unjust, deceitful, and perfidious ? Yet it is this world we are not ashamed to love. It is from this world that God would draw us, to deliver us from its cursed slavery, that we may enter into the liberty of detached souls.

O my God, thou who seest the foundation of our misery, it is thou alone that canst heal it. Haste then to bestow on us faith, hope, love, and that Christian fortitude which we want. Grant that we may incessantly look up to thee, O Father Almighty,

who givest nothing to thy children but what is conducive to their salvation.

Lift up my heart, O my God! Give me one that will fear only to displease thee. Lord, thou seest the weakness of thy creature, who has no resource in himself, every thing fails him; and so much the better, provided thou dost not fail him, and that he seeks in thee all that he despairs to find in his own heart.

On Crosses.

ALL that is painful in our way to God, are crosses, which we must patiently bear, and they will be a means of uniting us to him, if we endure them humbly. The things that confound and overwhelm our pride, will do us still more good, than such as animate our virtue. We have need to be cast down, like Paul at the gates of Damascus, and to be deprived of all resource but in God alone.

Nature only inspires an haughty and disdainful courage, and is provoked at those persons that God makes use of, in order to humble us. We must bear his crosses in silence, with an humble, peaceful courage; being strong in God, but not in ourselves; great through the sweetness of patience, and little through humility.

When God, in the humiliations he sends us, wounds us even to the quick, so much

the better: it is the merciful Physician that applies a remedy to those disorders he has a mind to heal: let us be silent, and adore the hand that strikes us: let us not open our mouths but to say, "I have well deserved it." Be the cup ever so bitter, we must drink it even to the dregs, as did Jesus Christ. He died even for his murderers, and has taught us to love, bless, and pray for those who are the cause of our sufferings.

In the seasons of adversity and temptation we ought to be doubly earnest in our prayers. We shall find in the heart of Jesus dying on the cross, all that we want in our own hearts, to engage us to love those whom our pride prompts us to hate.

When we love the cross, it is but half a cross, because love softens every thing; and we suffer much because we love little. Happy is he who suffers much, and wretched is he who suffers not with Jesus Christ; for we are come into this world only to be made perfect through sufferings.

God tries us by sickness, and by outward subjections, all which we must turn to our advantage. All our crosses are necessary for us. When we suffer much, it is because we have many attachments that should be cut off.

Crosses are our daily bread: our soul has occasion for a certain portion every day, in order to detach it from itself, as the body stands in need of a certain quantity of food to

nourish it. We stand in need of crosses, and should be destitute of all good, was not God careful to turn the life of this world into bitterness, in order to detach us from it.

The cross is never without its fruit, when we receive it in the spirit of sacrifice. We must accept it, adoring the hand of God, who lays it on us only for our sanctification. Blessed is he who is always ready, and never says, it is too much; who depends not on himself, but on the Almighty; who desires no more consolation than God is willing to give him; and whose nourishment is the pure will of God.

There are in crosses so many marks of mercy, that if nature is afflicted, faith ought to rejoice. It is in the cross we find peace, by submission and the sacrifice of our pleasures. Thus far does God urge the soul to bring it from all that is not himself. What then is to be done, but to embrace the present cross, and suffer ourselves to be crucified? When he has thoroughly crucified, he comforts us; but does not as the creatures do, give us poisonous comforts to nourish the venom of self-love. His comforts are pure and solid.

The peace that is experienced in submission, without any outward alleviation, is a great gift: by this God accustoms us to be exercised without being dejected. Though our too slothful nature should be cast down, our heart remains firm; it is a peace so much the purer, as it is barren.

The consideration of the right of God over us his creatures, and that of our own wretchedness, which deserves nothing but humiliations and crosses, is the bread that ought to nourish us in all trials. Let us suffer God to act; men can avail nothing: sometimes, when all seems to be lost, all is in reality saved. God is pleased to cast us down, and raise us up again by his hand alone.

The crosses, which we choose for ourselves, are scarcely any thing: it is God alone who knows how to crucify us.

The crosses which are sent by God, and under which he would have us bend, will not in themselves suppress our pride: it is only by a renunciation of our spirit in silence before God, that we shall become humble and softened through his grace.

The crosses of an anxious solicitude, with regard to futurity, are not according to the will of God: we have no unction to support us in them; nor shall we suffer them but through an infidelity which alienates us from grace; so that they are always bitter, all is darkness, nor is there any resource; and the soul that would, through curiosity, taste this forbidden fruit, finds in it nothing but death and rebellion without consolation. This is the effect of not trusting God, and daring to penetrate into those secrets of which he is jealous.

Let us then shut our eyes with regard to all that God conceals from us, and that he

keeps in store in the treasures of his wisdom: let us adore without seeing: let us be silent: let us continue in peace. The crosses of the present moment always bring with them proportionable grace, and consequently their mitigation: we then see the hand of God which manifests itself in them.

Jesus Christ says, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* Matt vi. 34. The evil of each day is converted into good, when we suffer God to act. What are we that we should say to him, 'For what reason dost 'thou do this?' He is the Lord, and that is sufficient. *It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.* 1 Sam. iii. 18. Whether he raises us up, or casts us down; whether he strikes or comforts us: whether he bruises us, or heals our wounds; whether he gives life or death, he always the Lord, we are but his workmanship. What does it signify, so he is glorified, and his will accomplished in us? Our comfort ought to be the certainty that he wills our salvation.

Let us come out of ourselves; let us no longer love ourselves with a disorderly love, and the will of God, which will in all things unfold itself, will also comfort us in whatever he brings to pass around us, or in us.

When our heavenly Father tries us here below, with a variety of temptations both inward and outward, let us rejoice; for it is by such afflictions, that our faith more precious than gold is purified. Let us rejoice,

that we thus prove the delusion and emptiness of all that is not God; for it is by this experience, that we are drawn from ourselves and the desires of the world. What, shall we be discouraged when it is the hand of God that hastens to perform his work? This we every day wish that he may do, and yet when he begins to do it, we are troubled; our sloth and impurities resist the hand of God. A piety without crosses is merely ideal.

Whilst we remain shut up in ourselves, we are exposed to the contradictions of men; our passions clash with those of our neighbours; the sensibility of our passions, and the jealousy of our pride, render us open to attacks from all sides; there is no peace or hope in ourselves, while we are at the mercy of a troop of covetous and insatiable desires, and while we know not how to content this *me*, that is so jealous, so delicate, and so suspicious of every thing that touches it.

Hence it comes to pass, that in our intercourse with our neighbour, we are like a sick man who has languished a long time in bed: there is no part of his body but what is sore to the touch: diseased self-love is so softened by itself, it cannot bear to be touched, without crying out. To this delicacy add the rudeness of a neighbour, so full of imperfections, that he does not even know them himself, and likewise the reproaches of that neighbour against our imperfections which are as great as his. Thus do the sons

of Adam punish each other: behold in all nations, all towns, all communities, all families, and even between two friends, the martyrdom of self-love.

The remedy by which peace is to be found, is to come out of self. We must renounce it, and sacrifice all self-interest, that we may no longer have any thing more to love, to fear, or to be solicitous about. It is then we taste the true peace reserved for *men of a good will;* that is to say, for such as have no other will but that of God, which becomes theirs. Then men can do no more to us; for they cannot lay hold of us either by our desires or fears. Man has no power against us but what is given him by God, and that power being the will of God, is ours also. In this state we place our treasure so high, that no hand can reach to deprive us of it. They mangle our reputation, but we submit to it; for we know how good it is to be humbled when God humbles us. We are disappointed in friendship; so much the better; he is the only true friend who is jealous of all others, and who detaches us from them, to render our attachments more pure. We are harassed, constrained, and reduced to submission, but it is God that does it, and that is sufficient: we love the hand that bruises us, and we find peace in all these troubles: blessed peace that attends us even to the cross!

The more perfect our resignation, the greater will be our peace: if there still re-

main some attachments, and some desires, our peace is imperfect: when all cords are broken, then there is unbounded liberty. Let disgrace, pain, and death, fall upon me, while I hear Jesus Christ, who says to me, *Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more power that they can do.* Luke xii. 4.

O how weak are they, even when they deprive us of life! Very contracted is that power which can only break an earthen vessel; that can only kill what of itself dies daily: they can hasten a little that death, which is in fact a deliverance; after which we escape out of their hands into the bosom of God, where all is permanent peace.

We are in this world only to suffer; woe unto those that have their consolation in this world! They will not find it in the next. This life is the season of temptation and trials, to correct, purify, and wean us: when we have no more to suffer, we shall no longer have occasion to live; as a patient, when cured, is discharged from an hospital: it is only by suffering that our cure is effected.

We must never think of those who disquiet us, but in order to forgive them; we must regard God in them, who makes use of them to exercise our humility, our patience, and our love of the cross. We shall hereafter, in the presence of God, see how useful they have been to us who have crucified us, by nailing us to the cross with Jesus

Christ. The pains they cause will soon pass away, but the fruit resulting from them will be everlasting.

On Sensibility in Troubles.

THIS sensibility is, by our great Creator, interwoven in our constitution, in order to exercise our patience and resignation. Let us then enter into his designs. Temptations are necessary for us; but let us remember he always proportions them to our strength. Those within, as well as those that are from without, all tend to crown us with victory, if we are faithful in the combat. Inward temptations are, however, more useful, as they more immediately humble us, and make us sensible of our inward corruption. Those from without, serve to show us the malignity of our neighbour, while those that proceed from within, make us sensible that we are as much depraved in our dispositions as the rest of the world.

Let us, with a humble confidence, bear the temptations that spring from our own hearts, as well as the storms we encounter from others. Pride often renders us uneasy and dejected, at the experience of that inward opposition which proceeds from our passions: it wishes to have all in subjection, that it may glory in the combat, and behold with complacency its own perfection.

Let us then endeavour to be faithful, by turning our will entirely to God; let us in all tempests commit ourselves to him, who means to show us by them, the shipwrecks to which we should be exposed, did not his Almighty hand preserve us in them.

Should our frailty so far prevail as to make us voluntarily fall, then let us humble ourselves, and lose no time to return to God: but let it be done with calmness and resolution. Let us, when fallen, rise again, and vigorously renew our course, without being discouraged at the sight of our folly.

The necessity of the Purification of the Soul, with respect to the gifts of God.

GOD, though apparently so severe, never causes any to suffer for the sake of suffering. He strikes only to heal; the severity of the operation proceeds only from the evil that must be taken away: he would make no incision if all was sound....Judge, therefore, how deep and envenomed must our wounds be, since God, who is so tender of us, causes our sufferings to be so sharp.

Thus as he makes us suffer only in order to our cure, so he sometimes deprives us of his gifts, that he may restore them to us an hundred fold. Through love he deprives us

of the purest of his gifts, when we possess them impurely. The purer our gifts are, the more jealous is he of appropriating or directing them to ourselves. The most eminent graces are the most deadly poisons, if we rest in them, and regard them with complacency. It is the sin of the fallen angels; they only turned to themselves, and regarded with complacency their state; at that instant they fell from heaven, and became the enemies of God.

This example shows how little men think of those sins which are the greatest of all; yet it is very rare to find a soul so pure as to possess the gifts of God with purity, without assuming a property in them. When they think of God's graces it is for themselves. They are grieved and dejected when all sensible relish and perception of grace is taken from them: in short, it is self and not God that engrosses their thoughts.

From hence it comes to pass, that all perceptible virtues have need to be purified, because they nourish the natural life in us. Corrupt nature can derive food even from those graces that are the most contrary to nature: self-love is fed, not only by austerities and humiliations, by fervent prayer and self-denial, but even by the purest self-dereliction, and the greatest sacrifices: to complete our purification, we must sacrifice even the gifts of God. This must be done before the offering can be perfect; all must be given up;

we must even renounce the perception by which we reflect on having abandoned all.

Man does not find God perfectly, but in the loss of all his gifts, and in the real sacrifice of all that belongs to self. We cannot lose ourselves totally in God, till all other support fails us.

We ought, therefore, rightly to comprehend the necessity of this deprivation of God's grace, which, by degrees, purifies every divine gift; for there is not one, be it ever so exalted, that after having been the means of our advancement, does not in the end commonly prove a snare and an obstacle to us, by our imagined property in it, which sullies the soul; and for this reason God withdraws his favours.

But he takes not away his grace to deprive us of it for ever: he takes it only to restore it without that defiling appropriation which we, unknown to ourselves, had assumed in it. The loss of the gift serves to discover to us that it was not our own, and being thus undeceived, it is restored to us an hundred-fold.

Of the internal Operation of God, to bring Man back to the true End of his Creation.

IN the infancy of our spiritual life, God exercises us, to bring us by degrees from

all the creatures that we love too much. But this outward work, although necessary for the foundation of the edifice, constitutes but a small part of it. The internal work, although invisible, is the greatest, most difficult, and wonderful.

There comes a time, when God, after having stripped us, and mortified us by the creatures to which we were attached, exercises us inwardly, in order to draw us from ourselves. It is not foreign support he then deprives us of, but that very self which was the centre of our love; all the rest we only loved for self, and it is this self which God would remove. Cut off the branch of a tree; so far from killing it, you add strength to the sap, and will see it bud with redoubled vigour; but go to the root of it, and it will languish, cast its leaves, and at length die. Thus would God have our old man completely destroyed.

Let no one say, these are vain imaginations. Can they doubt God's immediate operation on the soul? or that he does not so act as to destroy the life of self? Can they doubt that God, after having mortified the grosser passions, does not endeavour to subdue all the subtle windings of self-love, especially in souls generously and without reserve devoted to the spirit of grace? The more he would purify them, the severer are their inward trials. The world can neither see nor understand these trials; the world is blind, its wisdom is foolishness, it cannot

agree with the Spirit of Truth; for as the apostle says, *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

At first they are not accustomed to this inward work, which deprives the soul of every thing. They are very willing to be silent, to leave themselves to the directions of Providence, as a man suffers himself to be carried by the stream: but they are afraid of hearkening to the internal voice that calls them to the sacrifice God has prepared.

The opposition of our own wisdom and self-love to these motions, sufficiently proves that they are from God, as it is evident that what prevents our obeying them is some selfish sensibility. The more we fear to do these things the more necessary they are: for our fear is owing to delicacy, an untractable humour, or an attachment to earthly views and satisfactions; but all these sentiments of the natural life must be extinguished. Thus, all pretence for delay is removed by the innocence of the matters in question, and our inward conviction that they will conduce to the destruction of self.

A readiness and compliance in these motions is advantageous to the soul. Those who have strength enough not to hesitate, soon make a wonderful progress. Others reason, and never fail to find some pretences to dispense with their following these mo-

tions: they would and they would not; they wait for certainties; they seek such advice concerning their state, as may free them from doing what they fear to do, and at every step they look behind them: they faint in irresolution, and insensibly drive from them the Spirit of God.

At first they grieve him by their hesitations, then provoke him by actual resistance, and lastly extinguish the good motions by reiterated disobedience. This resistance of grace is always under the cover of divers pretences, which they find to authorize it: but insensibly they lose the unction of the Holy One, and the simplicity of faith; and notwithstanding all their endeavours to deceive themselves, they are not at peace; they have something at the bottom of their hearts which incessantly reproaches them with their neglect of God. But as the consequence of their neglect is God's withdrawing from them his sacred checks and inspirations, so the soul becomes more hardened; it no longer tastes true peace; on the contrary, it is every day more alienated from it, by seeking it where it is not; it is like a dislocated bone, which, though always painful while out of its proper place, yet does not endeavour to regain it; but, on the contrary, fixes itself in its wrong situation.

On Christian Perfection.

CHRISTIAN Perfection has not in it that severity and restraint we may imagine. It indeed requires that we should devote ourselves to God from the bottom of our hearts; but then when we are thus devoted unto God, all that we do for him becomes easy. Those that with undivided hearts thus live to God are always content; for they will nothing but what he wills, and would do all for him that he would have them do; they part with every thing for his sake, and receive from him an hundred-fold reward.

Peace of conscience, the sweetness of being resigned to God, the joy arising from the increasing light of God in their souls; and finally, a freedom from the fears and tyrannising passions of the world, constitute that hundred-fold of happiness which the true children of God possess in the midst of crosses, if they are but faithful.

Happy the man who thus gives himself to God. He is delivered from his passions, from the rash judgments of men, their malevolence, and the tyranny of their maxims; from the inconstancy of friends, the snares and artifices of enemies, from his own weakness, from the sorrows of life, from the horrors of a wicked death, from the cruel remorse arising from criminal pleasures; and lastly, from the eternal condemnation of God.

The Christian is delivered from a multitude of evils; seeing, that by placing his will in the hands of God, he wills no more than God wills: and thus he finds his consolation through faith, and hope, in the midst of all his sufferings.

Happy they who, with fixed faith, resign themselves into the arms of the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, as he is called by St. Paul: then they desire nothing more than to know what they owe to God: and they fear nothing so much as not to see what he requires. When they receive fresh light from his law, they rejoice as a miser who has found a treasure.

The true Christian resigns himself to all the calamities that Providence is pleased to afflict him with; wills all that happens to him, and never wishes for what he has not: the more he loves God, the greater is his contentment; and the highest degree of perfection, far from oppressing him, renders his burden the lighter.

O the folly of fearing to be too much devoted to God! It is fearing to be too happy; it is fearing to be in all things too much attached to the will of God; it is fearing to support with too much fortitude our inevitable crosses; to derive too much consolation from the love of God; and to be too much disengaged from those passions that render us miserable.

Let us then despise all earthly things, that we may be entirely at the disposal of

God. I do not say that we should part with them absolutely: for when our lives are regular and honest, there is little more to be done, than to change the inward affections of our souls: externally our actions will be nearly the same; for God does not subvert the different conditions of life, nor require us to abandon those employments in which he himself has placed us: the chief difference will consist in this, that we shall now do to please God, what we formerly did to please the world and ourselves, and instead of being carried away by our pride, our tyrannic passions, and the malicious censures of the world, we shall, on the contrary, act with freedom, courage, and confidence in God: our hope will animate us; we shall be supported in the midst of all our distresses, by the expectation of that everlasting happiness which daily approaches, while all earthly joys pass quickly from us: the love of God will make us sensible of his love for us, give us strength to walk in his ways, and raise us above all calamities: If this is difficult to be believed, experience will convince us of it; *Come, taste and see*, says David, *how gracious the Lord is.* Psalm xxxiv. 6.

The Son of God says to all, without exception, "*If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me;*" Matthew xvi. 24. the broad way leadeth to destruction; we must walk in the strait way, where the few are to be found. None

but such as lay great restraint on themselves, can win the kingdom of heaven. They must be born again, become as little children, renounce themselves, be poor in spirit, mourn in order to be comforted, and be no longer of this world, which is condemned because of offences.

These truths offend many people, because they see plainly what religion requires, without knowing what it bestows ; and they are ignorant of that spirit of love which eases every burden. They know that this religion leads us to the highest perfection, by giving us, through the love of God, a peace which softens all the calamities of life.

Those that with undivided hearts devote themselves to God, they prove the truth of this divine saying, that *the yoke of Jesus Christ is easy*, *his burden light*, that in him *the soul finds rest*, and that, according to his promise, *he refreshes all that are weary and heavy laden.*

But what woe attends those slothful and timorous souls that are divided between God and the world! They are unstable and irresolute. They are afraid both of the judgment of God and of man ; they are terrified at the evil, and ashamed of the good ; they have the sufferings of virtue, without tasting its consolations. O! if they had courage to despise the vain discourse, insipid railleries, and rash censures of men,

what peace would they taste in the bosom of their God?

How dangerous to our salvation, how hurtful to the peace of our minds, is it to wish to linger here? Our whole life is only given us, that we may proceed with hasty step towards our heavenly country: the world vanishes as a vain shadow, and eternity advances to receive us: whilst the light of the Father of mercies shines on us, let us hasten to arrive at the heavenly Canaan.

The first commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Now, how can any one think he loves God, if he does not meditate on his law, and apply himself to the accomplishment of his will?

Those who are afraid to see too clearly what his will requires, are far from this watchful and attentive love. There is but one way of loving God, which is not to take any step but with him and for him, and to follow with a grateful heart all his inspirations.

Those who are under pious restraints, but yet would gladly follow the world a little, thinking that to do so is but a trifle, are in great danger of being of the number of those lukewarm Christians, of whom the Spirit says, that God will *spew them out of his mouth*. Rev. iii. 16.

God is displeased with such slothful servants as say in their hearts, thus far will I go, but no further; does it belong to the

creature to set bounds to the Creator? What would a master say to his servant, or a king to his subjects, who were fearful of being devoted too much to his service or interest, and who would blush to have their attachment appear to the world? What then shall the King of Kings say, if we imitate these base servants? The time approaches, when we shall be called to account; it will soon arrive, let us hasten to prevent it; let us love the everlasting beauty which never decays, nor will suffer such as love it to decay. Have we not seen within these few years, persons in the most exalted stations, surprised by death, and sunk into the everlasting abyss? This world to which we are so much attached, we are just on the point of leaving; and what is it in itself, but vanity and folly? It is a phantom, and the *fashion of it*, as St. Paul says, *passeth away*. 1 Cor. vii. 31.

The way of Faith is better, and more secure than that of Lights and sensible Relishes.

THOSE who are attached to God only, so far as he affords them pleasure and consolation, resemble those people, who follow Jesus Christ not for his doctrine, but for the loaves which he miraculously multiplied. They say with Peter, *Lord, it is good for*

us to be here, let us buildthree tabernacles: but they know not what they say. After being delighted with the sweetness of Mount Tabor, they forsake the Son of God, and refuse to follow him up to mount Calvary. They not only seek for sensible tastes, but also for extraordinary lights: that is to say, the understanding is desirous to see, while the heart wishes to be moved by soft and flattering sensations. Is this to die to self? Is this to live by faith?

They would feel, taste, and possess God and his graces; they would penetrate into the hearts of others, dive into futurity, and become quite extraordinary; for an eagerness for lights and sensations, by degrees brings a soul to the secret desire of all these things.

The Apostle shews us a more excellent way, by which he excites in us an holy emulation; when speaking of charity, he says, *It seeketh not its own;* 1 Cor. xiii. 5. It is not the pleasure it seeks, but God, and the accomplishment of his will. If it finds a sweet sensibility in prayer, it makes a transitory use of it to assist its weakness without resting in it. What would become of us, if we were always to remain children, hanging at the breast of heavenly consolations? We must, as St. Paul says, *Put away childish things*; 1 Cor. xiii. 11. The first fervours were good to attract us, to detach us from gross and worldly pleasures, by

others more pure and elevated; and lastly, to accustom us to a life of prayer and recollection.

But to taste a delicious pleasure which obliterates the idea of the gross, and to enjoy a fervour which makes us live as if Paradise was already open to us, is not to be crucified and die to ourselves.

He who has no other support, will abandon prayer when that source of pleasure is dried up. Many people leave off to pray when their prayer becomes most profitable. How many souls, who, because when children in Jesus Christ, they were too tender, and too much trusting on this sweet milk, fall back and forsake the inward life from the time that God begins to help them? Nor need we wonder they considered that as a sanctuary which is but the outer court of the temple; they would mortify the outward senses, to live internally with more delight to themselves. From hence proceed so many mistakes even amongst those souls, apparently the most fervent and abstracted. Even such as have spoke much of dying to self, and parting with all, are frequently the most discouraged in the day of trial, when all sensible consolation is withdrawn. O how good it is to believe without seeing, and to be contented in the midst of poverty.

From an attachment to sensible tastes proceeds all illusion: we are much mistaken if we imagine this sensibility to be an evi-

dence of security. On the contrary, it often occasions a falling off; it is a flattering bait to self-love. They fear not to be deficient in their duty to God, while this spiritual delight lasts. They *say in their prosperity, I shall never be moved:* Psalm xxx. 6. but when this rapture is over, they think all lost; thus they are too apt to put their own sensibility in the place of God. Nothing preserves us from illusion but a pure faith. When we rely not on extraordinary lights, but God alone in a pure faith, receiving the consolations that are given, but never resting in any, not judging, but always obeying; sensible we may be easily deceived; acting with simplicity and a good intention, then are we in the way furthest from delusion.

On the true Light.

JESUS Christ is *the light of every man that cometh into the world.* John i. 9. As there is but one sun that illuminates all bodies in the universe, so there is but one light that enlighteneth all souls. This light is Jesus Christ, the eternal word of God. O how miserably blind are all who imagine themselves wise, while they continue destitute of that wisdom which Jesus Christ inspires! Revelation appears to them like a dream; the gospel is preached to all ranks

of people, but they comprehend it not. Its wisdom is called foolishness.

O vain and foolish world, is it in thee that we should trust? Thou art but a mere illusion, and yet thou wouldst have us confide in thee! We find that in possessing thee, thou hast nothing substantial wherewithal to satisfy our hearts. When thou offerest thyself to us with a smiling countenance, it occasions troubles. When every thing is ready to disappear, thou presumest to promise us happiness: but he alone is truly happy, who, by the light of Jesus Christ, discovers thy emptiness.

On the Presence of God.

THE principal instrument or means of our perfection, is contained in this expression of God to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect;* Gen. xvii. 1. The presence of God calms the mind, and gives sweet repose and quiet even in the midst of our daily labours; but then we must be resigned to him without any reserve. It does not require a great deal of time to love God, to draw near unto him and enjoy his presence, to lift up our hearts to him, or adore him at the bottom of them, nor to make him an offering of all we do and suffer; this is the true *kingdom of God within us*, Luke xvii. 21, which nothing can disturb.

When the rovings of the imagination hinder us from possessing a quiet and peaceful frame of mind, let us at least calm ourselves by the integrity of our will; and the desire of a composure does in a manner prove a sufficient one; we must also turn our minds inward to God, and do whatsoever he would have us with an upright intention.

Let us take care that we be not voluntarily occupied too long, either outwardly or inwardly, about things which create such distraction of heart and mind, as draw both the one and the other so much out of themselves, that it is with difficulty they can return to find God.

As soon as we feel that some foreign object gives us too much pleasure and delight, let us withdraw our heart from it; if we are but faithful, even in a small degree, inwardly to preclude the creatures, so that they may not rest in the heart, which God has reserved for himself, there to dwell, and there to be loved and honoured, we shall quickly taste that pure joy, which he never fails to give a soul that is free and disengaged from worldly affections.

When we perceive in ourselves strong desires after any thing, be it what it will, and find that our inclination carries us too precipitately towards it, though it be only to say somewhat, to see something, or go any where; let us strive to moderate ourselves, and request of God, that he would stay the

precipitation of our thoughts, and the commotion we are under; for he himself has said, his Spirit abides not in hurry and tumult.

Let us be careful not to concern ourselves too much with what others say or do, and that we let it not enter too much into our minds: for it is a great cause of disturbance. As soon as we perceive what it is that God requires of us in any particular, let us adhere to that; by this means we shall preserve a freedom and evenness of soul, and retrench many needless things, which embarras the mind, and hinder it from turning to God.

An excellent means of keeping ourselves in an inward quiet, and freedom of spirit, is, at the conclusion of every action to lay aside all reflections arising from it, dropping all regards of self-love, arising from vain joy or grief. Happy the man who retains nothing in his mind but what is necessary, and who only thinks of each thing just when it is the time to think of it: so that it is rather God who excites the perception and idea of it by a discovery of his will, than the mind's being at the trouble to find it. Let us accustom ourselves to have our minds inwardly recollected during the day, and in the course of our employments, by looking singly to God. Let us sever ourselves from every thing that comes not from God, put away all vain thoughts and wild imaginations, and speak no idle word. Let us seek God with-

in us, and we shall infallibly find him, and with him joy and peace.

In our outward occupations, let us be employed more with God than any thing else; to perform them rightly, we must perform them as in his presence, and for his sake. At a view of God's majesty, a calmness and serenity should possess the soul. One word of our Saviour heretofore calmed a boisterous and raging sea, and now one look of him towards us, and of us towards him, will still daily do the same.

We must often lift up our hearts to God; he will purify, enlighten, and direct them. It was the daily practice of David, who says, *I have always set God before me.* Psa. xvi. 9. Let us frequently repeat the following expressions of his: *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psa. lxxiii. 25, 26.

We need not stay for leisure hours to shut the door, and retire; for whenever we regret the want of retirement, it is enough to introduce us into it; even when at meals, or while others are talking, unprofitable discourses instead of tiring may relieve us, by affording some interval of inward retirement. Thus all things are converted into good to those who love God.

We should frequently read such books as are proper for our state and condition, and in reading make some pauses to leave room

for the spirit to act, that inwardly draws the mind to recollection. A few simple words, but full of the spirit of God, are the hidden manna: and though we forget the words, yet they operate secretly, so that the soul is fed and nourished by them.

On Conformity to the Will of God.

ALL virtue consists in the rectitude of the will. This is what Jesus Christ would have us understand by these words: *The kingdom of God is within you.* Luke xvii. 21. He does not require great knowledge, great talents, nor great actions; all that is necessary is, that we should have an heart to love God.

The spiritual life is the commencement of the blessed peace of the saints, who always say, Amen, to the dispensations of Providence. They praise, they bless God in every thing; they see him in all things, and his paternal hand is the sole object they regard. There are no more evils, for even the most painful that can happen, *work together for good*, as St. Paul says, *to those that love God.* Can we call those afflictions evils which God sends to purify us, and make us worthy of him? That which is beneficial to us, cannot be called an evil.

Let us then cast all our cares into the bosom of so good a Father. Let us leave it

to him to do as he pleases. Let us be content to follow his will in every thing, and let our will be perfectly resigned to his. The only thing which is truly ours is our will; but then it is that of which God is jealous; for he has given it to us, not that we may remain proprietors of it, but that we should return it to him entire, without retaining any part of it.

Alas! how many souls are there proprietors of themselves, who are willing to serve God and love him, but then it must be according to their own will and self-direction; they would have God observe the rules which they prescribe to him with regard to his manner of drawing them to himself: they would serve him, but they would not give themselves up to him. When they appear full of zeal and fervour, their spiritual abundance becomes an obstacle to them, as they find a propriety even in their own virtues, and are continually seeking themselves in the exercise of them. The soul that is truly mortified, and dead to the life of self, that renounces its own will, that it may will only as God would have it, is superior to such fervent and enlightened souls as would proceed in the path of virtue according to their own way.

This is the deep sense of the words of Jesus Christ, *Whoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and follow me.* Matt. xvi. 24. We must follow Christ step by step, and not open a way for ourselves to

him. We can follow him no other way but by renouncing ourselves. Thus St. Paul tells us, *Ye are not your own.* Woe to him who resumes what he has already devoted. Let us then beseech the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, to take away a disposition to please ourselves, without suffering the smallest part to be retained by us! Such an operation will cost us dear: we shall find it difficult to let God act when he wounds us in the most sensible part. But here is the patience of the saints, and the sacrifice of pure faith, to be experienced.

Let us leave it to God to work in us all his good pleasure, without resisting him. When we perceive the revolt of nature and our senses, let us with confidence turn to God, and join with him against our slothful and rebellious nature; let us deliver it up to the Spirit of God, and he will by degrees destroy it. Let us, in his presence, watch over our smallest defects, that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit; let the faults we commit turn to our profit, by causing us humbly to reflect on our own frailty, without rendering us over-much dejected.

The kingdom of God is indeed come in us, when, independently of all outward helps, we regard nothing but the hand of God alone as the doer of all. To be willing to serve him in one place more than another, or in such or such a way rather than the contrary, is to serve him after our own manner, and not after his. But to be equally ready

in all, to desire and will only in conformity to him, to leave ourselves in the hands of Providence, and to set no bounds to our submission, is to serve him with true self-renunciation.

Instructions how to obtain internal Peace.

O HOW different is the peace of God from that which the world can bestow! It calms the passions, preserves the purity of our conscience, and is inseparable from righteousness, unites us with God, and fortifies us against temptations; and when temptations do not overcome us, they always yield good fruit.

A true simplicity; a tranquillity of the mind, which is the fruit of resignation to the will of God; a patience with regard to the defects of our neighbour, which the presence of God inspires us with; a willingness to confess our faults, and be reprehended for them; also to submit ourselves to the advice of experienced persons; these are virtues useful and necessary to our sanctification.

The pain thou experiencest with regard to several things arises from thy not receiving with sufficient resignation, all that can happen to thee. leave then all things in the hands of God. When thou givest up thyself entirely to God, thou wilt find thyself at

peace, and full of the joy of the Holy Ghost. Woe to thee, if in the work of God thou expectest assistance from man! The least respect to any thing that is human, extinguishes grace, and increases thy irresolution.

How can we refuse to give up our whole hearts to God, who has loved us from the beginning, and loved us with the tenderness of a father, who pities us as his children, who is sensible of our weakness, and knoweth whereof we are made? He has followed us in our ways, which are those of sin; he has run after us, as a shepherd in search of his strayed sheep. We may say, he loved us even to the death of the cross, and that the measure of his obedience was that of his love. When that love fills the soul, it tastes the sweets of a peaceful conscience; it is content; it wants neither grandeur, reputation, nor pleasure; it wills only what God wills, and watches in the blessed expectation of the bridegroom's coming.

On being resigned to God.

OF all the blessings we have occasion to seek for in retirement, the principal is the peace of simplicity, which never regards futurity with solicitude. The future is not ours, but God's, and he will so order it as

to be suitable to our necessities: but if, through our own wisdom, we endeavour to dive into that futurity, the only fruit of our inquiries will be uneasiness! Let us, therefore, think of nothing but how we may make a good use of the present day: each day has its good and its evil, in such a manner that the evil is often converted into good, provided we are faithful, and suffer God to act without our preventing him by our own impatience.

God will give sufficient time and opportunity to draw near unto him. He will not, perhaps, give us all that we may desire, that we may employ ourselves according to our own inclination, and so live to self, under the pretence of perfection; but we shall not want either time or opportunity to renounce ourselves and our own inclinations. All other time is lost, though it may seem to be well employed.

Be persuaded also, that in all these things we shall find whatever is suitable to our real wants; for so far as God disconcerts our inclinations, so far does he support our weakness. Let us suffer him to act in us. Avoid only, by a regular and tranquil employment, all melancholy and impatience, which are the most dangerous temptations nature is liable to.

Of interested and disinterested Love.

SUCH souls as are really detached from themselves, like the saints in heaven, regard the mercies distributed to others, with the same complacency as those they receive themselves: for esteeming themselves as nothing, they love the good pleasure of God, the riches of his grace, and the glory he derives from the sanctification of others, as much as that he derives from them. All is then equal; for the Me is lost, the Me is no more Me than another person: it is God alone that is all in all: it is him they love and admire, who causes all the joy of their hearts by this disinterested love.

But there are many pious persons that remain in some degree attached to self. These remains of self-love serve even to support them in the practice of virtue, and to purify them to a certain degree. Nothing could be more dangerous, than to deprive them of this comforting consideration of the graces of God, with regard to their own perfection.

Concerning Amusements.

WHEN amusements are innocent in themselves, it is sufficient if we partake of them with moderation, and as in the presence of God. Manners stiff and reserved

can only serve to give a false idea of piety to the people of the world, who are already too much prejudiced against it, and who imagine they cannot serve God but by a sad and melancholy life.

Let us walk with simplicity in peace and joy, which are the fruits of the Holy Ghost. He who walks in the presence of God, is, even on indifferent occasions, doing the work of God, though he appear to be doing nothing important. I always suppose that we are under the direction of God, and that we act conformably to his providence, by doing even the most indifferent things in that state in which he has placed us.

Most people, on becoming converts, or reforming their lives, think more of performing extraordinary and difficult actions, than of purifying their intentions, and dying to their natural inclinations on the most common occasions; by which means they are frequently deceived. When our lives are honest and regular, we become Christians more speedily, by altering that which is within, than that which is without. God is not content either with the sound of the lips, the posture of the body, or outward ceremonies. What he requires is an undivided will, that neither desires nor rejects any thing; that wills, without reserve, all that he wills; and never wills, under any pretence whatever, in contrariety to him.

Let us carry then, wherever Providence conducts us, a will full of simplicity, and

united to God. Seek God in those hours which appear void of good, and they will not be so to us, for God will support us in them. O the ease of heart that is experienced, when God opens this path of simplicity ! We then walk like little children, whom their mother leads by the hand, and who suffer themselves to be conducted by her. We are content to be in subjection, or content to be free. We are willing to speak, or to be silent.

Let us remember that even our virtues, in the exercise of them, require to be purified by the disappointments Providence throws in our way, the better to detach us from all self-will. O how simple, amiable, discreet, and secure in all its ways is piety, when its corner-stone is submission to the will of God, without consulting either our taste, our temper, or the sallies of an immoderate zeal ! We live almost like other people, without affectation, or the appearance of austerity, in a sociable manner ; but in a constant submission to all the duties of our calling, in a renunciation of every thing that is contrary to the will of God, with a pure view to him, to whom we must sacrifice all the irregular emotions of nature. This is the adoration in spirit and in truth, which Jesus Christ and his Father seek. Every thing else is but a religion of ceremony, and rather the shadow than the substance of real Christianity.

It may be asked, by what means is this purity of intention to be attained, in a life exposed to the bad examples and conversation of the world? I answer, Reading and prayer will be helpful to lay the foundation of our security. By reading, I do not here mean such as tends only to satisfy curiosity, and make us knowing on religious subjects; the reading I recommend is what is simple, such as may be reduced to practice, and tends to nourish the heart. When we read not to increase our knowledge, but to know better how to be diffident of ourselves, then will our reading be truly advantageous to us. To reading, prayer should be added, in which we may silently meditate on some great truths of religion. And when we perceive our thoughts to wander in this exercise, recal them gently, without being discouraged at the importunity of these distractions. While they are involuntary, they cannot hurt us: on the contrary, they will be of more use than a prayer accompanied with sensible consolation and fervour; for they will tend to humble and mortify us, and accustom us to seek God purely for himself, without considering too much our own pleasure: provided we constantly withdraw night and morning to practise these things, we shall find them an antidote against the dangers that surround us. I say night and morning, because the nourishment of the soul, as well as that of the body, must be

continually renewed, to prevent its falling into decay, and being wasted by its continual intercourse with men. But we must be resolute both against ourselves and others, to reserve the time allotted for this purpose; nor must we suffer ourselves to be drawn away by outward occupations, so as to lose the time that is to nourish our souls.

It is also necessary to set apart certain days for retirement and recollection; when, as at the feet of Jesus, we may obtain a remedy for all the wounds of our heart, and have all the malignant maxims and opinions of the world effaced. This is even serviceable to our health: for provided we know how, with simplicity, to make the best use of these short retirements, they will conduce to the health of the body, as well as the soul.

As to amusements, they ought to be agreeable to our profession of piety, and the good example the world expects from us. For the world, immersed as it is in itself, would not have such as despise it, act contrary to the contempt they have for it; nor can it avoid esteeming those, by whom it sees itself to be of small estimation. True Christians have cause to be thankful that the world is so severe a censor; for by this means they are under the greatest necessity of doing nothing that is unedifying.

If we perceive ourselves dejected with sorrow, or elated by pleasure, we must, without uneasiness, return to our heavenly

Father, with whom we may expect to find joy and freedom in our sorrow, moderation and recollection in our joy, and may rely on not being disappointed. The turning of our hearts to him will reanimate us, and though we should perceive our souls dull and discouraged when God sets us on any work, he will give resolution and a facility in the discharge of our duty suitable to our necessity. This is the daily bread we constantly ask for, and which will never fail us; for our Father, far from forsaking us, desires to find our hearts open, that he may bless us.

We must not wait for outward liberty and retirement to be detached from the world, and to overcome the old man: the thought of a free state is no more than a pleasing idea; it may never be our lot. We should be ready to die in our present servitude. Providence may prevent our projects of retirement: we are not in our own power. The Israelites, in Babylon, sighed after Jerusalem, yet how few of them ever saw Jerusalem more, but ended their days in Babylon! What an illusion would it have been, if they had deferred, till their return to their own country, to worship the true God, and to perfect themselves! Perhaps our state may resemble that of the Israelites.

On the Employment of our Time.

IT is true, notwithstanding the progress some have made, much remains to be done: a persuasion of the mind, or even a good disposition of the heart, is at a great distance from an exact and faithful practice. Nothing has been more common at all times than to meet with people perfect and holy, as far as speculation goes. The Saviour of the world says, *Ye shall know them by their fruits*. Matth. vii. 16. And this is the only rule that does not deceive us, provided it be rightly discovered; it is by this rule we should judge ourselves.

A general means of employing our time well, is to accustom ourselves to live in a constant dependance on the Spirit of God, receiving what he is pleased to give us; consulting him in our doubts, when we must always be ready to obey his dictates; having recourse to him in our weaknesses; invoking him, and raising our heart to him, when drawn away by outward objects, it sees itself carried insensibly out of the road, and is surprised into forgetfulness and separation from God.

For the well employing our hours of business, it is sufficient that we attend with simplicity to the mandates of the Divine Providence. We should take care not to be overwhelmed by a multiplicity of occupations, be they what they will.

We must endeavour to begin all our undertakings with a view to the glory of God, to continue them without dissipation, and to end them without hurry.

The time of entertainment (or what may be called relaxation) is the most dangerous to ourselves, and perhaps the most useful to others: it is then more especially we should be upon our guard; that is to say, most faithful as to perceiving the presence of God. The Christian watchfulness so much recommended by our Lord; not only habitual, but as much as possible, actual aspirations and elevations of the mind and heart to God, by those simple views which faith inspires; the sweet and peaceful dependance which the soul should have with regard to grace, acknowledging it as the only principle of its security and strength; all these things are now to be put in practice, to preserve us from the subtle poison which is frequently hid under pleasures and amusements, and to know how to conduct ourselves wisely, in such things as may instruct and edify others. This is especially necessary for men and women in eminent stations, whose words and behaviour may frequently be the cause of much good or evil.

Our vacant hours are generally the most pleasing and useful to ourselves; we can scarcely employ them better than by consecrating them to the renewing of our strength (I may even say our bodily strength) by a

secret and intimate communication with God.

Prayer is so necessary, and the source of so many blessings, that the soul who has found this treasure, cannot avoid having recourse to it whenever it is left to itself.

I have other things to say to you on those three portions of our time; perhaps I may hereafter mention them, if the views which at present strike me do not vanish: however, if they do, the loss is but small; God gives us new views when he pleases; if he does not, it is a sign they are not necessary; and when they are not necessary for our advantage, we should rejoice in their being lost.

MEDITATIONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. 1 John ii. 15.

THESE are words of great extent. The world is nothing more than a multitude of people who love themselves, and who love the creatures without respect to God. The desire of authority, the love of a reputation we do not merit, dissipation in company, the seeking such things as gratify our senses, sloth, and remissness in all Christian exercises, and a want of application in studying the truths of the gospel; all these things are the fruits of the world. It lives in us, we desire its love, and dread its neglect. Blessed was that apostle to whom the world was crucified, and he unto the world.

It is true the world promises peace, but then it never gives it; it affords some transitory pleasures, but they cost more than they are worth. Jesus Christ alone can

give peace to man; he reconciles him to himself; he subdues his passions; he sets bounds to his desires; he comforts him in his love, and gives him, even in the midst of pain, a joy which cannot be taken from him.

We wish to love God, and yet are afraid of displeasing the world, which is his enemy. Do we not know that the friendship of the world makes us enemies to God? Woe then to those who please the world, that blind and corrupt judge. It is not sufficient, according to the apostle, that the world should be crucified to us, but we must also be crucified unto it. People are apt to imagine themselves far from the world, because they live retired; but they speak its language, and have the same sentiments and delicacies; they have the same desire of reputation, friendship, and amusements; they bear with pain the smallest humiliation. They say, they would willingly forget the world, but yet feel in the bottom of their heart, that they would not be forgotten by it, but vainly do they seek to compromise matters between Jesus Christ and the world.

There are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Luke xiii. 30.

HOW many sinners are there, who, after having wandered many years in igno-

rance of the Truth, shall, by the fervour of their penitence, leave those behind them, who have, from their earliest youth, tasted the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and whom God has prevented by his sweetest benedictions? How glorious will it be to those who were last, thus to bear away the crown, and be, by their example, a condemnation to others? But how grievous will it be to the first to become last, to see themselves left behind by those to whom they were formerly a model, to lose their crowns, and to lose them for the sake of some trivial amusements which retarded their progress! I cannot observe the recollection of some persons, their disinterestedness and humility, without blushing to see how much we are dissipated, vain, and attached to temporal conveniences. Let us haste to run, lest we be left behind.

That we are made to serve one another.

I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.
Matt. x. 45.

THIS is what ought to be said by all people who have authority over others; it is nothing more than a ministerial office, and we should in reality serve those we seem to command: we should bear their imperfections, endeavour with mildness and patience

to correct them, wait for them in the ways of God, believe ourselves sent for their advantage, humble ourselves to soften their necessary disciplines, and beg of God to change their hearts, which is a grace they could not obtain for themselves. Let us examine ourselves with regard to such as are committed to our care, and for whom we shall be called to an account before God.

Of Meekness, and Lowliness of Heart.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.
Matt. xi. 29.

IT is the Son of God alone who can teach us this divine lesson: *He, who being equal with God, made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.* Phil. ii. 6, 7. What has he not done for the love of us? What has he not suffered for us, and what does he not still continue to suffer? *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet opened he not his mouth.* Isaiah liii. 7. And we, notwithstanding, complain of the slightest ills; are vain, delicate, and easily affected.

There is no real meekness without lowliness of heart: whilst we are full of ourselves, every thing we see in others will offend us; but when we are thoroughly per-

suaded that nothing is due to us, then nothing will disturb us. Let us often think of our own failings, and we shall become indulgent to those of others. Let us often think of these important words of the Son of God, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.*

On true Greatness.

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke xiv. 11.

SINCE we are so fond of being exalted, let us seek it where it is to be found, and where its existence will be eternal. Let us aspire to true greatness, which is only to be found by abasing ourselves in this world. God confounds the proud; in this life, he sends him many cross accidents, and in the end will humble him for ever; but the humble, who desires to live in obscurity, shall be respected, because he never desired to be so; and an everlasting glory shall be the reward of his contempt of a false glory.

On what we ought to found our Joy.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand. Philip iv. 4, 5.

IT is our being disgusted with our passions and the vanities of the world, which ought to be the source of our joy; it should be founded on our confidence in God; and we must not hope to be agreeable to him, but so far as the world is displeasing to us. It is our expectation of Jesus Christ, that ought to render us moderate and persevering; we should be always ready to receive him, and rejoice at his coming: for he cometh to judge the world, and to be our comforter.

How sweet is it to expect the coming of Christ, whilst the children of this world are afraid of it! They shall tremble, whilst his followers, with joy and confidence, shall behold the coming of their gracious deliverer. Blessed state! Let those who have not attained it, aspire after it. We are prevented from being in this state of confidence and consolation by our sloth and vain amusements.

Of Confidence in God.

I sleep, but my heart waketh. Cant. v. 2.

WE sleep in peace in the bosom of our God, by committing ourselves to his

providence, and by a sweet remembrance of his mercy. Why do we still entertain doubtful and uneasy reasonings, and are impatient to change our situation? The place where we are, is the bosom of God: for he has placed us there with his own hands. Can we be uneasy where he hath put us, and where we are like a child embraced by its mother? Let us repose ourselves on him, and in him. This confidence, which extinguishes all the motions of carnal wisdom, is the true watchfulness of the heart. To commit ourselves to God, without depending on any thing but him, is to make our heart wake while we sleep. Thus the eyes of love will always be open, that they may look at their well-beloved; and we shall not sleep the sleep of death.

On the Defects of others.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Gal. vi. 2.

CHARITY does not extend so far as to oblige us not to see the defects of others; not to do that we must be blind: but it requires, that we should avoid being unnecessarily observant of them, and that we who are so quick sighted to their failings, should never be blind to their merits. Charity is

not blind to what is contemptible, but bears with it, in order to co-operate with the secret designs of God; it does not indulge a disdainful aversion, or impatience. No corruption astonishes it, no weakness discourages it, for it relies on God alone, and perceives that all which is not him, is nothing but vanity and sin.

Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. John xvii. 4.

WE ought each of us to endeavour after such a state as to be enabled to say as much, at that day when we shall be called to give an account of our works. I ought to regard that which offers itself to me, according to the order of God's providence, as a work he gives me to do, and apply myself to the accomplishment of it in a manner worthy of him, that is to say, with diligence and quietness. I will not neglect any thing, nor will I be passionately eager in my proceeding; for it is dangerous to do the work of God negligently, or through self-love and a false zeal to make it our own; in that case God's work would be done by our own spirit, and therefore ill done. We should be vexed, offended, and solicitous for its success. The glory of God is the pretence. O God, give me grace to be faithful and diligent in the action, and indifferent as to

the event. The one thing needful for me is to will thy will, and to remember thee in all my employments. Thy part is to give to my weak efforts such fruits as shall please thee, or not any, if so be thy will.

Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh. Matth. xxiv. 44.

THESE words are addressed personally to us, in whatever age or station we be. Nevertheless, even good men form projects, which suppose a long life, and that at a time when it is just drawing to a conclusion. If in the last stage of an incurable disorder, they entertain hopes of a recovery, what do they not hope for in full health? But whence comes this obstinate hope of life? It is because they passionately love it. And whence comes it that they would so long put off the stroke of death? It is because they love not the kingdom of God, nor the greatness of the world to come. The true means of being always ready for the last moment, is to employ the others well, and be in constant expectation of it.

They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.
Psalm cxxvi. 6

WE must sow that we may reap; this life is the season for sowing; in the other we shall

enjoy the fruits of our labour. The man of this world, slothful, and impatient, would reap before he has sown. We wish to have God bestow comforts upon us, and smooth the way that leads us to him. We are willing to serve him, provided it costs us but little. To hope for much, and suffer little, is the aim of self-love.

How blind are we? Shall we never perceive that *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*, Matt. xi. 12. and that none but courageous souls, who vanquish themselves, are worthy to obtain it? Let us then be contented to weep here below, since it is declared, *Blessed are they that mourn*, Matth. v. 4. and *Woe to you that laugh now*. Luke vi. 25. The woe is to those who have their consolation in this world! The time will come, when their vain joys shall be confounded; the world shall lament, and *God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes*. Rev. vii. 17.

On our daily Bread.

Give us this day our daily bread. Luke xi. 3.

O MY God, what is this bread? It is not only what thou affordest us for the support of this life, but that food of truth, which thou givest daily to the soul. It is a bread which nourishes us to life everlasting:

which increases and strengthens the soul in the trials of faith. Thou renewest it daily. Thou givest what is sufficient to the soul, for its advancement in the life of faith, and the renunciation of self.

All that is bitter in outward things, or in the interior of my soul, and all that befals me in the course of the day, is my daily bread, provided I refuse not to accept it from thy hand!

On the Peace of the Soul.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
John xiv. 27.

ALL men seek for peace; but they do not seek it where it is to be found. The world promises peace, but cannot give it. It offers transitory pleasures, but they are not worth the pains they cost. Jesus Christ alone can give peace to man; he cures our passions, and regulates our desires. He comforts us with the hopes of everlasting blessings: he makes us taste that inward joy, even in pain; and as the spring that produces it is inexhaustible, and the bottom of the soul where it resides, is inaccessible to all the malice of men, it becomes a treasure to the righteous which no one can take from them.

Desire nothing but God, seek him alone, and you shall find peace. What is it that is

the cause of your uneasiness? Is it poverty, contempt, bad success in your undertakings, inward and outward crosses? Regard all these things as coming from the hand of God, and in reality blessings in disguise, which he distributes to his friends, and of which he vouchsafes to make you partakers. This will change the face of the world with regard to you, and nothing shall be able to deprive you of your peace.

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. John iv. 13.

THE more we drink of the corrupted waters of this world, the more we are athirst; the more we indulge ourselves in what is bad, the more do uneasy desires spring up in our hearts. The possession of riches only increases our thirst for them. Avarice and ambition are more discontented about what they have not, than they are satisfied with what they really possess: the enjoyment of pleasures enervate the soul, they corrupt it, and render it insatiable. The more we are diverted, the more we would be so: it is easier to preserve our hearts in a state of fervour and penitence, than to bring them back or restrain them, when they have once got a bias towards pleasure and diversion. Let us then be watchful over ourselves; let us avoid drink-

ing a water that will increase our thirst. Let us diligently guard our hearts, lest the world should seduce them with its vain consolations, and leave them in the end nothing but the sorrow of being deceived.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matt. v. 5.

WHAT a new kind of tears are those which make such as shed them happy?* Their happiness consists in mourning at the corruption of the world that surrounds us, the snares that encompass us, and the inexhaustible fund of evil in the bottom of our hearts. It is a great gift from God, to fear the loss of his love, and to dread, lest we should stray out of the strait and narrow path.

This is a subject of tears. It is difficult to rejoice while we are in danger of losing all that is most precious to us, of losing our very selves. When we also behold nothing but vanity, error, scandal to religion, forgetfulness and contempt of that God we love, it is impossible not to be afflicted. Let us then weep at the sight of so many mournful subjects. God will not be displeased at our sorrow; it is he who inspires us with it; it is his love that fills our eyes with

* Augustine.

tears, and he himself will come and wipe them away.

O blessed tears, the work of grace, which make us disrelish all transitory things, and cause the desire of eternal blessings to grow up in us!

How great is the loving-kindness of the Lord our God, and his compassion unto such as turn unto him in holiness! Eccles. xvii. 29.

IN the presence of God, meditate on the effects of this infinite mercy; on those instances of it which thou hast already experienced; on the lights received from Jesus Christ; on the good thoughts he has inspired thee with; on the sins he has forgiven thee; the snares of the world from which he has preserved thee; and the extraordinary succours he has afforded thee. Strive to affect thy heart, by reflecting on all these precious tokens of his goodness. Add to them the remembrance of such crosses as he has laden thee with, in order to sanctify thee; for they are also riches, which he has drawn from the depth of his treasures, and ought to be regarded as signal testimonies of his love.

Let the remembrance of the past inspire thee with confidence as to the future; be not diffident of God, but only of thyself; he is,

as the apostle says, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

On the Easiness of the Yoke of Christ.

Christ saith, *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matt. xi. 30.

LET not the name of yoke terrify us. Jesus Christ will cause us to love this yoke; he sweetens it by the inward charms of truth and righteousness; he sheds his chaste delights over virtue, and causes us to loathe false pleasures; he bears man up against himself, draws him out of his corruption, and renders him strong in spite of his weakness. O man of little faith, what dost thou fear? let God act for thee; give up thyself to him. Thou wilt suffer, it is true; but it will be peaceably, and with love. Thou must fight, but shalt gain the victory; and God himself having fought on thy side, will crown thee with his own hand. Thou shalt weep, but thy tears will be sweet, and God shall come with tenderness to wipe them away. Thou wilt no longer be suffered to yield thyself to thy tyrannic passions; but by sacrificing thy liberty, shalt gain a freedom unknown to the world, and more precious than all the power that kings possess.

What a blindness is it to fear the being too far engaged with God! The more we love him, the more we shall love the work he assigns us. It is this love that comforts us in all our troubles, that softens our crosses, that shows us a gracious mercy in the midst of all the ills we suffer, and discovers to us, even in death itself, everlasting glory and happiness. How can we dread the being too much engaged to him? Is it an unhappiness to be delivered from the heavy yoke of the world, and to bear the light burden of Jesus Christ? Shall we fear being too much freed from ourselves, from our pride, the violence of our passions, and the tyranny of a deceitful world?

On the right Employment of our Time.

While we have opportunity, let us do good. The night cometh when no man can work.
Gal. vi. 10. John ix. 4.

TIME is precious, but its value is unknown to us. We shall attain this knowledge when we can no longer profit by it: our friends require it of us, as if it was nothing; and we give it to them in the same manner. It is often a burden to us; we know not what to do with it. The day will come, when a quarter of an hour will appear of more value, and more desirable, than all the ri-

ches of the universe. God, who is liberal and generous in all his other gifts, teaches us, by the wise economy of his Providence, how circumspect we ought to be in the right management of our time, for he never gives us two moments together; he gives us only the second, as he takes away the first, and keeps the third in his hands, leaving us in an absolute uncertainty whether it shall ever be ours or not. Time is given us, that we may take care of eternity, and eternity will not be too long to regret the loss of our time, if we have mispent it.

Our whole life, as well as our whole heart, is God's, nor are they both too much for him. He has given them to us only that we may love and serve him. Let us not rob him of either. It is true we cannot every moment perform great actions; but we may do such as are agreeable to our state. When we are not called to any outward employment, to be silent, to suffer, or to pray, is to offer much to God. A disappointment, a contradiction, a complaint, a vexation, or unjust accusation received and suffered in the sight of God, is as valuable as time spent in prayer. We do not throw away our time, when in the loss of it, we practise meekness and patience; but we must remember, that this loss must not be procured by our own neglect.

Let us not waste our days in amusements, unprofitable correspondences, effusions of the heart, which flatter self-love, nor in con-

versations which dissipate our spirits, and tend to no good purpose; and thus we shall find time enough for God; and no time is well employed but what is employed for him.

On the Presence of God.

Walk before me, and be thou perfect. Gen. xvii. 1.

THUS didst thou say, Lord, to faithful Abraham; and whosoever walketh in thy presence, is in the road to perfection. We do not stray from that holy way, but by losing sight of thee. Alas, where shall I go, when I see thee not, thou who art my light, and the only end to which my steps should be directed? To look up to thee in all my ways, is the sure means never to go astray. Blessed is that faith which shines in the midst of the darkness that surrounds us. O God, it is thee alone I seek and consider in all those outward objects which my eyes seem to regard; the order of thy Providence is what attracts my attention.

Thus I endeavour, O thou sole object of my heart, to re-unite my whole attention in thee, even when, according to thy Divine will, I am obliged to divide my cares. Ah! what can I see in men, if thou ceasest to be my director, or if I cease to see thee in them?

I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help. Psalm cxxi. 1.

IT would be in vain for me to have my eyes fixed solely on my feet, to deliver me from the innumerable snares that surround me. The danger is from below, but deliverance can come only from above. Thither my eyes are lifted up to behold thee, in every thing here; both inward and outward, there is a snare to me. It is towards thee, therefore, O Lord, my eyes and heart are lifted up. I would see only thee; I would hope only in thee.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY's

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

That the Love of God ought to be our Principle, our End, and our Rule, in all Things.

THE true manner of loving our neighbours, is to love them in and for God. This love requires from us nothing but innocent and regular manners. Nothing need be retrenched but what is evil, and ought to be retrenched, if we had no other principle but right reason to direct us.

The love of God does not require from every Christian the austerities of the ancient hermits, nor that we should imitate their solitary lives. It does not usually require a renunciation of all good, lawfully acquired, or that we should part with all the advantages of our condition in life. It only requires

that we should be just, sober, and moderate in a suitable use of all these things. It only requires that we should not make them our God, and our happiness; this love does not increase our crosses, it finds them already thickly sown in every human state. Our crosses proceed from the infirmity of our bodies, and the passions of our souls: they proceed from our own imperfections, and the imperfections of those with whom we are obliged to live. It is not the love of God that causes our sufferings; on the contrary, it is that which softens them, by the consolation with which it seasons them. It even lessens our griefs, in proportion as it moderates the heat of our passions and our sensibility, which are the source of our real evils. If the love of God was perfect in us, so as to detach us from all that we are afraid to lose, it would put a period to all our sorrows, and render us happy in the enjoyment of a most blessed peace.

This love does not disturb or unsettle any thing in the order that God has established. It leaves the great in their greatness, and makes them little under the hand of him who made them great. It leaves the little in their lowness, and makes them content to be nothing but as he pleases. This content in the lowest station, has nothing mean in it, but is true greatness.

This love regulates and animates all those affections which we owe to God's creatures. We never love our neighbour so much, as

when we love him for God, and with his love. When we love men without God, we love them only for ourselves; we seek in them our own interest, either in a gross, or more delicate and disguised manner. To love another for ourselves, is to love him very imperfectly; it is rather self-love than true friendship.

LETTER II.

To the Duke of Burgundy, Father of Louis XV.

1708.

I THANK God, from the bottom of my heart, that I see with what simplicity and kindness you condescend to lay open to me all that passes in your breast. The greater the designs of God are towards you, the more jealous he is of your natural talents. It is his will that you should feel trouble, dejection, and oppression of heart, which overwhelms you, and weaknesses that render you dissatisfied with yourself; it would displease God if you should rejoice in your own strength, and reflect with complacency on your superiority over other men. Behave not as a great prince, but like a little shepherd who went with five stones against the giant Goliah. If you are not prejudiced, either for or against any one, and listen coolly to those you ought to listen to, or

consult with, and if, without any respect to your own natural inclinations or prejudices, you follow what God present and humbly invoked, shall inspire you with, you will find yourself free, relieved, simple, and well resolved : and you will commit no mistakes, but so far as you fail to act with a continual dependance on the spirit of grace.

I bless God for it, that you are not insensible of your defects, and that he has taught you to your cost, and by such hard lessons, to mistrust and despair of yourself. But seek in God all the resources which you find wanting in yourself. *I can do all things*, says St. Paul, *through him who strengtheneth me.* Phil. iv. 13. Live by faith, and not by your own wisdom, or your own courage. Do not be frightened at what you want: strive to gain it patiently by little and little, and in the contest depend only on God. He shows you how much wars are to be dreaded, how useless the mightiest armies are, and how easily the greatest nations are shaken. He shows you how severely the greatest princes are censured by the public, while flatterers cease not to offer incense at their shrines. When we are appointed to rule over men, we must love them for the love of God, and sacrifice ourselves for their happiness, though we know they speak evil of us, even while we rule them with kindness and moderation.

As to your piety, if you would do honour to it, you cannot be too attentive to render it sweet, simple, and easy. Proceed di-

rectly to the extirpation of your principal defects, through your love of God, and a renunciation of self-love.

LETTER III.

To the same.

I SHOULD be inconsolable on account of the misfortunes you experience, but in expectation of the fruit God will enable you to draw from these trials. God often bestows temporal prosperities on the wicked, to show how lightly he esteems what the world is so dazzled with; but for crosses he reserves them for his own, who he would humble under his Almighty hand, and make them the objects of his delight....Every man wants much, be he otherwise ever so great, who has never known adversity...Great princes, above all other men, require lessons of adversity; it is generally what they most stand in need of. They have occasion for opposition, to teach them moderation.

Without opposition, princes might forget that they are human. They should be sensible, that every thing is subject to vicissitude; that even their greatness is fickle; and that all men, who are now so officious in their services, would forsake them if they should lose that greatness.

An Extract from the Prince's Answers to Letters.

I SHALL endeavour to follow the advice you give me; and I beg you will pray to God to give me his grace so to do: also that he may grant me to love him above all things, and that I may love myself, my friends and enemies, in him, and for him. I hear many things that are said of me, and shall hear more. I condemn myself for things in which I am faulty, and the rest I despise, sincerely pardoning those that would do me wrong, and praying for them. I am determined to give myself up to God. Pray to him that he would finish in me what he has begun, and destroy in me what comes from sin and self.

LETTER IV.

On the Happiness of those who leave all in consequence of their being converted to God.

WHAT I have been told of the situation of your heart so affects me, that I must lay aside all ceremony with you. I am under a necessity of telling you, that we must yield to God, when he invites us to let him reign in our hearts.—Did we deliberate so

much, when the world invited us to yield ourselves to be seduced by amusements and our passions? Did we then so hesitate? Have we as much resisted the evil, as we have the good? did we ever seriously reflect when we strayed from the path of virtue, when we corrupted ourselves, when we acted contrary to the inward dictates of our hearts and reason, in quest of vanity, or sensual pleasure?

Do we consider, that it is an all-powerful hand that has made us? Do we make it our business to acknowledge that we owe all to him from whom we hold all, and that he has made us for himself alone? Instead of this, we are apt to waver, we deliberate, we raise doubts with regard to the clearest matters; we fear being too credulous; we are apprehensive of giving too much to him for whom all is not more than sufficient; we dare not let the world see that we are desirous of serving God; in a word, we are as timorous, irresolute, and uneasy with regard to virtue, as we have been presumptuous and inconsiderate in our irregular courses.

I desire but one thing of you, which is, to follow simply the bias that is in the bottom of your heart towards that which is good, as you have formerly followed the dictates of your passions towards that which is evil. As often as you examine the fundamentals of religion, you will readily acknowledge that there can be nothing solid objected to them, and that they who oppose them, only

do so that they may not subject themselves to the restraints of virtue : thus they refuse to follow God, only to please themselves. I would ask, What do we risk by serving God ? We shall have nearly the same duties to perform, and the same pains patiently to suffer ; but then we shall add to them the consolation of loving what is supremely amiable ; of labouring and suffering to please our true and perfect friend, who keeps account of our smallest performances, and rewards them an hundred-fold in this life, by that peace which he sheds in our hearts. Lastly, we shall add to them the blessed hope of everlasting life.

Ask your virtuous friends, of whose sincerity you have no doubt ; ask them what it has cost them to serve God, whether they repent their being engaged in his service ? They were once in the world like yourself ; ask them whether they regret their having forsaken it, or if the intoxication of Babylon is sweeter than the peace of Sion ? They will say, whatever crosses we suffer in the Christian life, we never lose that peace of mind, in which we are content with all we suffer, and never desire those joys we are deprived of.

From LETTER V.

Containing divers admonitions and precautions to a person, who, whilst living in the world, is desirous of being converted unto God.

THE principal point is, that in good earnest you devote yourself to God, which is to be effected by a due distrust of yourself, suitable to the many experiences you have had of your own weakness; and to renounce, without delay, all such company as endangers your relapse....If you are desirous of loving God, why will you pass your life with those who love him not, and make a jest of his love? Why are you not pleased with the company of those that love God, a connexion with whom would be a means of strengthening and establishing your love? ....I do not desire you to break precipitately and absolutely with all your friends, and those persons whom a proper regard to decency obliges you to have some intercourse with; still less do I desire that you should abandon what are called duties. But I speak of such continued connexions as have a natural tendency to enervate the mind, and which insensibly draw us away in opposition to our best resolutions. I speak of avoiding frequent conversations with vain persons, whose ambition is to please, and all other company that awakens your taste for pleasure, and oc-

casions a dissipation that is exceedingly dangerous. All this would be very hurtful to men the most confirmed in virtue, and consequently is still more pernicious to one who has only taken the first step towards it.

The holy scripture says, *He that loveth danger, shall perish therein.* It is necessary, however dear it may cost us, to leave all such things as border upon vice. We are obliged, according to the command of Jesus Christ, *to cut off our hand*, and *pluck out our eye*, if they *offend us*; Matth. v. 29, 30. that is to say, if they become snares to us, and endanger our fall.

One principal thing you have to do, is, to withdraw from all those amusements, that are still more dangerous for you, than for others; and to confine yourself to the society of a few select persons, who think as you would wish to do all your life.

LETTER VI.

Admonitions to a person wavering with regard to his Conversion to God.

SUFFER me to show you how blamable you would be, in the sight of God, should you resist the knowledge of the Truth, and those lively sentiments with which God has inspired you. This would be to resist the Holy Spirit itself. The journey you have

been at the pains to take, would condemn you. You cannot doubt of the baseness of the world, its incapacity to make you happy, or of the illusion that there is in all its flattering promises. You feel the reality of the existence of God, by the wisdom which shines forth in all his works, and the virtues with which he inspires those men who are filled with his love. What can you object against things that are so convincing, except your love of liberty, or unaptness to be taught? You are afraid to bear the yoke; and this is the true leaven of a certain incredulity which produces your objections. You would persuade yourself, that your belief is not yet strong enough, and that in this state of doubt you cannot take any step towards religion without rashness, and being in danger of an immediate relapse: but in these doubts you impose upon yourself, in order to dispense with the destruction of self, and the sacrifice of a liberty of which self-love is jealous. You can object nothing to the truths of religion, but the fear of being too much restrained, and leading a melancholy uncomfortable life; nothing but the fear of being carried further than you desire in the road to perfection. It is by setting a high value on religion; feeling its just authority; and seeing the sacrifice it inspires, that you are afraid of it, and dare not give yourself up to it.

But permit me to tell you, that you do not yet know how sweet and amiable it is. You see what it takes away, but you see not what

it gives. God will conduct you with discretion: if he restrains your corrupt passions, he will by the virtue of his love give you such a taste for truth and virtue, as will be superior to all your irregular inclinations.

Be just to yourself, and you will soon be just with regard to God. Humble yourself, be diffident of yourself, be little in your own eyes, be sensible of the darkness of your understanding, and the frailty of your heart. Instead of pretending to judge of God, suffer yourself to be judged by him, and acknowledge that you stand in need of his assistance, in order to your reformation. Nothing is great but this inward littleness of the soul. Nothing is reasonable but this just disavowal of our own erring reason.

O how enlightened is the humble soul! What truths it sees, when it is thoroughly convinced of its own darkness, and is left without any further resource for its presumption!

LETTER VII.

The Danger of a person engaged in the World.

I HEARTILY pity M——s, as I perceive his present conflict is very great. He has begun to turn to God, but his virtue is

yet weak. He is under a necessity of wrestling with all his natural propensities, his inclinations, those habits to which he is most attached, and likewise his strongest passions. He is accustomed to continual dissipation, and has not less to resist from without than within. He is surrounded with temptations, and bad examples: every thing he sees, leads him to evil: he is at a distance from all good examples, or good advice. An infant piety, so circumstanced, is, I grant, exposed to an uncommon trial. Yet I cannot think it agreeable to the design of God, that he should suddenly abandon his employment without paying any regard to form or decency. If he is faithful to attend to those duties which are likely to help him, to watch over his own conduct, to be diffident of himself, and avoid dissipation, I hope God will take care of him, and not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able. That conduct which God inspires, and which is the result of his love, is generally directed by a gentle and imperceptible Providence; which so leads to the things required, that they appear to come of themselves. There must be nothing forced or irregular. It is better to wait a little, to open the door with the key, than, through impatience, to break the lock.—If this retreat proceeds from God, his hand will open the way for it: he must rely only upon God, and fear nothing so much as his own frailty. I wish then that he may be very wary with regard to the temptations incident to his em-

ployment, but not to throw it up in a precipitate manner. Let him fear, lest he deceive himself: perhaps he thinks less of securing his salvation, than of leading a more easy, sweet, and agreeable life; and flies less from sin than from the disgusts, the troubles, the fatigues, and restraints of his present situation. This is a natural deception; and it is very common for self-love to persuade us, that we act from a conscientious principle, when it is that which in fact has the greatest ascendency in our determination.

O how does God compassionate and console the contrite heart, which has resource to him with confidence! He has compassion on all; he is inexhaustible in goodness, patience, and love. I pray that he may direct our friend.

LETTER VIII.

How to distinguish the Impulses of Grace from those of Nature.

I HAVE considered your difficulty with regard to distinguishing between the impulses of grace, and those of disguised nature. The best evidence that we are actuated by grace, is, first, when the outward action is pure, and conformable to the perfection of evangelical counsels: secondly, when we act with simplicity and calmness, without

any eager desire with regard to the action, but are content to abstain from it, if it appears that we ought to do so: thirdly, that after having done it, we seek not by uneasy reflections to justify the action, but readily submit to have it found fault with; and in the end do not appropriate to ourselves the action, but leave it to the judgment of God: fourthly, when, after the action, the soul remains in its simplicity, peace, rectitude, lowliness, and disapprobation.

There is one thing which appears to me worth observing, which is, that it is often more easy to perceive what is the result of nature than of grace. Let us peaceably drop natural impulses, as well those of idleness as those of impetuosity; those that are the consequence of a refined understanding, as those that are excited by the gross desires of the flesh; and in this peace let us act, without exceeding the bounds of Christian precepts and counsels, as our hearts dictate to us in the presence of God, in order to our dying to ourselves, and pleasing our well-beloved.

But we must be careful lest we fall into scruples, and dangerous trouble, by desiring so to order all things, that we may assure ourselves we perform them through grace; for this would be to quench grace, by requiring an assurance that we follow it; under a pretence of security, it would be entering into all the views of self-love, which we pretend to shun: it would be passing our life in reasoning on the operations of grace,

without daring to trust ourselves to them; it would be following nature to discover grace, and to constrain the state of faith.... And now, to speak more immediately and directly to your own case, remember that the bias of your nature, and the snare of illusion, which you are to fear, is not gross debaucheries, but the excesses of reason, and the intemperance of a wisdom diving too deep. Reason but little, and do much; instead of which you are tempted to reason much, and by that means to do little. Even wisdom ought to be sober, and temperate. This sobriety, and the simplicity of the understanding, are the same thing. Reasoning produces nothing but irresolution, and is a hinderance to the work of God. Walk in the light, while it shines forth, instead of examining into the source and cause of it.... The exercise of true love dispels all doubts, and loaths speculative reasoning.

LETTER IX.

A Letter of Consolation.

IT is but a poor consolation to tell you that I have a deep sense of your calamity. It is, nevertheless, all that human weakness can do; and to do any thing more, we must have recourse to God. It is to him then, that I address myself; to that comforter of the

afflicted, and protector of the weak. I beg of him not to deliver you from your trouble, but that he may make it profitable to you, that he would give you strength to bear it. The sovereign remedy against the great evils of our nature, is sharp afflictions; it is in the midst of sorrows that we accomplish the great mystery of Christianity, that is to say, the inward crucifixion of the old man. It is here the virtue of grace unfolds itself, and operates most intimately, which is to teach us not to have a dependance on ourselves. We must come out of ourselves, to be able to resign ourselves to God. Thus our heart, wounded in the most tender part, troubled in its sweetest, most just, and innocent attachments, perceives it can no longer keep possession of itself, and is drawn from itself, that it may advance towards God.

This is the great remedy against the evils sin has oppressed us with; the remedy is severe, but the evil also is very deep. God strikes two persons nearly united, which proves an unspeakable good to each: he takes one to heaven, and renders this afflictive stroke salutary to the other, who remains on earth. This is what God has done for you. May he, by his holy Spirit, awaken your faith, so that you may be penetrated with these truths! This shall be my prayer; and as I have great confidence in the prayers of people in affliction, I beg you will pray for me in the midst of your sorrows. Your charity will tell you

what I want, and cause you to ask it for me with earnestness.

LETTER X.

Hearts, united in God, are together, however separated by space.

AT the bottom of my heart I am always united to you and your dear family. Though we cannot see each other, yet are we very near; whereas people who meet often in the same room, are in reality very distant the one from the other. God unites all, and with regard to hearts united in him, annihilates the greatest distances.

I am not insensible of the loss I sustain in being deprived of the sight of you, but I must bear it patiently as long as God pleases, and even till death, if it be his will. Let your necessary duties engage your attention. As for the rest, be retired and recollected, careful to regulate well your affairs. May our Lord bless your household, and may it ever be his own.

LETTER XI.

The Danger of an active and dissipated Spirit.

I AM pleased with the excellent letter you have wrote to me: I see in it your heart! I hope God will preserve you from the contagion of the age. The chief thing for you to guard against is, an easy temper, and natural activity. You have a greater tendency to dissipation than most people, and when dissipated you become weak. As you can only have your strength from God, you must not wonder that you are left destitute of his help, when you leave him. It is enough that he supports us when we do not fly from him; but when we estrange ourselves from him, and fear not to fall, we cannot hope for his assistance, which is met with in recollection and prayer. You have an openness of manner which pleases and prepossesses the world in your favour: there is nothing so dangerous as the power of pleasing: self-love is charmed with it, and this poisons the heart. At first people amuse and flatter themselves; then they are dissipated; and find all their good resolutions diminish; then they become intoxicated with themselves and the world; that is to say, with pleasure and vanity: afterwards finding themselves at a distance from God, they have no longer courage to return, and

dare not think of making the necessary sacrifices.

You have no remedy but to guard against dissipation. I intreat you to devote one quarter of an hour every morning, and the same towards evening, to reading and meditation, with freedom, simplicity, and affection. From time to time endeavour to renew the presence of God in your soul, and your intention to act for him: be humbled at the sense of your faults; strive to correct them; without flattering be patient with yourself, as you would be with another. I shall, with all my heart, pray for you.

LETTER XII.

We must prefer Humility, Charity, and the Practice of what we already know, to Reputation, and the Desire of knowing more.

I AM very well satisfied with your dispositions, and you do well to acquaint me, with so much simplicity, of what passes within you. There is nothing to be wondered at, in your having a kind of ambition to advance yourself in spirituality, and to be in the confidence of eminent people who are servants of God. Self-love naturally seeks

such kind of distinctions to flatter it. But remember, you must not be pleased with a sort of ambition that makes a shining progress in virtue, or desires the confidence of distinguished persons : no, you must die to the flattering appetites of self-love ; you must humble yourself, love obscurity and contempt, and aim at God alone.

It is not by hearing or reading a book on perfection, that we become perfect. The great point is, not to hear ourselves, but to listen to God in silence, to renounce all vanity, and to apply ourselves to real virtues. Speak little, and do much, without desiring to be noticed. God will teach you more than all the most experienced people, or all the most spiritual books. Ah ! why do you desire so much knowledge ? What do you want to learn, if it be not to be poor in spirit, and to find all your knowledge in Christ crucified ? *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity alone edifieth.* Alas, is so much knowledge necessary to know how to love God, and to renounce ourselves for the love of him ? You know a great deal more than you practise ; you have much less occasion for new lights, than to follow those you have already received. O how we deceive ourselves when we think we advance by reasoning with inquisitiveness ! Be humble, and never expect from men the gifts of God.

LETTER XIII.

To avoid looking into Futurity, and to live in Faith and Resignation to the will of God.

REGARD not distant events: this uneasiness about the future is in opposition to the grace received. When God assists you, regard him alone in the assistance he gives you, and receive it each day, as the Israelites did the manna, without providing for the next. Two things are necessary to the life of pure faith. The first is, that we behold God alone, under all the imperfect coverings that conceal him; the second is, constantly to have our souls kept in a state of dependance.

This perpetual dependance, this obscurity, and this peace of the soul in the uncertainty of what may happen to it, is a true martyrdom without ostentation. The death is so slow and inward, that it is almost as often hid from the soul that suffers it, as from those who are ignorant of its state. When God takes from you his gifts, he knows how to supply their place, either by other instruments, or by himself. Even stones in his hand can become children of Abraham. Eat then in peace your daily bread. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* To-morrow will provide for the things of itself. He who feeds us to-day, the same will feed us to-morrow.

LETTER XIV.

THE state of the apostles between the ascension of the Son of God, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, was a state of prayer and retirement; in which they waited for power from on high. The preparation for your receiving the Holy Spirit, is not to listen to your own spirit. The only obstacle I fear for you, is the want of quiet; give up all doubts and scruples, let them buzz in your imagination like bees in a hive; if you stir them up, you will provoke them, and they will do you much harm; if you do not meddle with them, you will only hear their noise, and be afraid of them.

Accustom yourself to peace of heart, in opposition to your restless imagination.

LETTER XV.

We are not to be disturbed at the Irregularities of Men, but submit every Thing to God, in the Accomplishments of our Duties.

A WARM imagination, a vivacity of sentiments, or a multiplicity of words, do scarcely any thing; the effectual method is to act before God in a thorough disengagement, doing all we can by his light, and being content with the success he is pleased

to give. One word spoken simply in this peace, operates more than all our ardent and eager cautions. As it is the Spirit of God that then speaks, it loses nothing of its strength and authority; it enlightens, persuades, affects, and edifies. Little is spoken, yet every thing is done. On the contrary, when we are led by the vivacity of our nature, we make many subtle and superfluous reflections, we are afraid we never speak or do enough, we exhaust our spirits, are dissipated, and yet nothing is done.

Let the water flow; let men be men, that is to say, weak, vain, inconstant, unjust, and assuming. Do not disturb yourself. Inure yourself to what is unreasonable and unjust. Rest in peace in the bosom of God, who sees better than you all these evils, and who permits them. Be contented to do with coolness the little that depends upon you: let every thing else be, with regard to you, as if it was not. I am well pleased to find, that you have leisure hours. Be neither covetous nor prodigal of them.

LETTER XVI.

I SYMPATHIZE in all your troubles; but there is a necessity for our bearing the cross with Jesus Christ in this short life. In a little time there will be an end of our suf-

fering, when we shall reign with God the Comforter, who will wipe away our tears, and before whom our sorrows and sighings shall flee away for ever. While we remain in this momentary state, whose trials are so light, let us suffer humbly and in peace. Self-love magnifies them in our imagination. A cross, borne in simplicity, without these returns of self-love, is made light to us. When we suffer in this simplicity of love, we are notwithstanding happy, for love is pleased to suffer for the sake of its well-beloved: and the cross that makes us conformable to him, carries its consolation with it.

Bear the heavy burden of the aged, who is no longer able to bear it herself. Reason grows weak at that age; even virtue, unless it be well grounded, seems to slacken: humour and fretfulness have then the strength which the understanding loses.

LETTER XVII.

I AM not sorry that age and infirmities make you now regard death, as near at hand, much more seriously than you formerly did when at a distance. A distant and confused view which we sometimes have, and is frequently diverted, is but like a dream: but the same view, when seen in solitude and the weakness of age, brings near us and realizes the object.

We should desire our dissolution (when it pleases the Almighty so to order). No doubt there is a joy in dying; but this joy does not depend on us; many great saints have been deprived of it: let us be content with wanting that which is not given us to taste. Let Nature refuse the bitter cup; but let the inward man say with Jesus Christ, *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* We are not master of our sentiments, but we are of our consent, assisted by the grace of God.

We properly enough wait for death, when we endeavour to be detached from every thing; when we humble ourselves for our smallest faults, with a desire of correcting them; when we walk in the presence of God; when we are tractable and patient in sickness; when we give ourselves up to the sipirit of grace to act under its influence; lastly, when we seek to die to self on all occasions, before the death of the body happens. Make a good use of your faults; assist your neighbour; disregard the forgetfulness of man; the faithful friend, the spouse of the heart, will never forget you.

LETTER XVIII.

IT appears to me that you want to be softened with regard to the defects of other people. I grant you cannnot avoid seeing

them when they are before you, nor can you prevent reflecting on the principles that seem to govern some men. It is sufficient that you are willing to bear with certain defects; that you pass no judgment on those that are doubtful, and that you do not indulge an uneasiness which would make you shun society.

Perfection easily bears the imperfection of others. God leaves, in the best souls, certain weaknesses entirely disproportioned to their high state, to show them by what remains, how much misery he has taken from them.

I ask of you now more than ever not to spare my faults. When you think you see one, which perhaps I have not, it will not disturb me if your admonition wounds me, the sensibility will show me you have touched me to the quick; so you will do me much good by exercising me in abjection, and accustoming me to be found fault with. I have more need than others to be pulled down, as I am more elevated by my situation in life, and God requires from me a greater death to all things. I have occasion for this simplicity; and I hope it will cement our union, instead of dissolving it.

LETTER XIX.

TRUE resignation has no road of its own, or desire of pleasing itself; it goes

on strait, as God pleases. The strait road is the renouncing ourselves, that God may be all, and we nothing. I hope that he who gives fodder to the cattle, and feeds the young ravens, will take care of you. Happy is he, who, like Jesus Christ, has not where to lay his head! When we have delivered ourselves up to the inward poverty, shall we be afraid of the outward? Be faithful to God, and God will be so to his promises. Do honour to religion that is so despised, and it will reward you with usury.

Be afraid of your vivacity, your love of the world, and the secret ambition, which slides into the heart without your perceiving it. Be not drawn aside by political conversation, or jovial mirth, which will dissipate you, and indispose you for recollection and prayer. Contract your discourse; be careful of your time; do every thing in order, and with regularity; and let good works take place of fine discourses. Confine your attention to the present moment; eat your daily bread: *the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* It is tempting God to provide manna for several days. You cannot this day have to-morrow's grace.

LETTER XX.

THE consideration of the greatness and goodness of God, may often be the subject of your meditations. Ask of God such affections as will attach you to him. For it is not through the understanding, or reasoning, that he draws souls to him, but through the disposition of our heart, and the abasement of our understanding.

Detest an effeminate, indolent, trifling life. As to your actions, when they are good in themselves, repress all reflections on the motives that incited you to perform them; otherwise you will never have done with yourself. You will be disturbed, discouraged, and by vain reasoning on your actions, will lose the time for acting. Let not your piety be melancholy, austere, and forced:....*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* If you once love him with all your heart, you will be almost always joyful, and your heart at liberty. But if you only turn to him, as the Jews did, through fear, you will not find him; but instead of him, will find nothing but sorrow. Be friendly, obliging, and courteous; this will cause you to be beloved. Let it be seen, that it is not through affectation, or dulness, but through true religion, that you renounce youthful vanities and lusts. Moreover, let it be seen that you are discrete, and to be depended on in all your dealings; and be

not ceremonious. Have but few friends, and many acquaintances. Be careful to please those who pass for good men, and whose esteem is reputable. Do not fear to ask such persons questions, when you grow a little intimate with them.

LETTER XXI.

I HAVE often thought of the things you mentioned to me yesterday, and I more and more hope that God will support you. Though you do not find a great relish for the practice of piety, yet you must not fail to be as faithful in it as your health will permit. A sick man recovering, still loathes his food; but for all his want of appetite, he must eat, in order to nourish himself.

It would be useful to you sometimes, to have a little Christian conversation with such persons as you might open yourself to; but with regard to your choice of them, I leave you at liberty, according to your present liking. God draws you to himself by a sensible stroke, and I am glad of it, provided you remain firm in what is good; for a fidelity, supported without taste, is much purer and more proof against all dangers, than the greatest relentings which are but too imaginary.

LETTER XXII.

The Effects of Indolence and Amusements; with Rules for our Conduct in order to overcome them.

WHAT you have most to fear is indolence and amusement. Even people, who are well resolved in the practice of virtue, and whose minds are filled with the horror of vice, these two defects are enough to throw into the most frightful disorders. Indolence is a consumption of the soul, which stupefies it, and takes from it all relish for what is good. You should then have a vigorous faith, that will master this indolence without ever hearkening to it. As soon as we begin to listen to it, all is lost. It does as much mischief, with respect to the world, as with respect to God. A man that is effeminate and dissipated, cannot but be a mean man; and if he has great employments, they only dishonour him. The love of his ease always overcomes him, in spite of his greatest interests. He knows not how to improve his talents, or get a necessary knowledge in his profession, or confine himself to the toilsome duties of it; neither can he so long submit to restraint, as to accommodate himself to the liking of other people, nor apply himself with courage towards his own reformation.

This is the sluggard, spoken of in the scripture, who would and who would not; who would do what he ought while it is afar off, but whose arms want strength as soon as he beholds this work at hand. What can we do with such a man? He is good for nothing.... Business wearies him; serious reading fatigues him. He must pass his life on a bed of down. Does he work? The moments seem hours to him. Does he amuse himself? The hours are then like moments to him. All his time is lost; he knows not what he is doing in it; he lets it pass away like the waters under the arch of a bridge. Ask him what he has done in the morning: he has done nothing; for he has lived without thinking whether he lived or not. He has slept as long as he could; has been long dressing; talked to the first comer; and taken some turns in his chamber. Dinner comes on the table: the afternoon he spends like the morning, and his whole life like this day. Once more: such a man is good for nothing. Even pride must render him insupportable to himself, in a state so unworthy of a man.

Such a man will not only be incapable of doing what is good, but will, by degrees, fall into the greatest evils. Pleasure will betray him. It is not for nothing that the flesh desires to be indulged; after having appeared indolent and insensible, it will suddenly become furious and brutal. You will not

perceive this fire till it is too late to extinguish it. You must also fear, lest your sentiments in religion, mixing with your softness, should engage you, by degrees, in a singular life, which will have some outward regularities, but nothing solid within.

A serious indolence, where the passions bear a lamentable sway, is productive of an obscure, slothful and corrupted life; at which even the world, bad as it is, cannot avoid being shocked. Thus, by little and little, you will quit the world, for an indolent life; which will be little less contrary to the mind of God, than the most depraved passions. But let us consider how to arm against this evil. With regard to your business, you should regulate it, doing all things by rule; and so settle your affairs as seldom to break in upon the plan you lay down. Neglect not your meditative reading in the morning; let that be the first thing you do, while people may imagine you are in bed. Towards evening read again. If you then find in yourself an inclination for a littlerecollection, by yielding to it, you will accustom yourself to spend the evening like the morning.

You should receive every one with civility. Let there be no air of pride, nor affectation, nor forwardness. Shew yourself to be a gentleman: salute and behave well to all the world, yet converse with but few. Bad company is dishonourable to all; but especially to a young man, who has not as yet an established character. You must visit

but few, and never those of bad repute. Do not ridicule them, as others do, but quietly avoid them.

Besides your never preferring yourself to any one, your manners must likewise be simple and ingenuous; your countenance open; and you must observe a complacency in your transient intercourses. Let every thing be a proof of nobility, and of a heart that is liberal, friendly, obliging, and affected by merit; solicitous to oblige, sorry when you cannot. Endeavour to season a piece of service with what may render it obliging, without making a merit of it. In such conduct pride seeks glory, and religion must thus seek true decency, from motives wholly divine. Nothing is so noble, so great, so heroic, as the heart of a true Christian; but in it there must be nothing false, nothing affected, nothing but what is simple, modest, and punctual in all things.

As to real friends, you must chuse them with much caution; and consequently limit yourself to a very small number: no intimate friend, that does not fear God, and whom the pure maxims of religion does not govern in all things; otherwise he may prove your ruin, be his kindness for you ever so great. Make choice, as much as you can, of friends a little older than yourself; they will occasion you to ripen sooner. Let your heart be open to your true friends; no secrecy with them but the secret of another, except in things you fear they may be prejudiced against.

Be disinterested, faithful, active, and constant in your friendship; but never blind to the defects or different degrees of merit in your friends; let them find you serviceable to them, and never let their troubles cause your affections to cool.

Treat your servants well. Let your authority be firm and gentle; be attentive to their wants; do them all the good you can; and cause them to be attached to you through love: bear with their faults when they are not essential, and they are willing to mend them. Lastly, remember, (and I finish as I began) that indolence enervates every thing, and makes all things wearisome; that it exhausts the strength of all the virtues and qualities of the soul. Even in the opinion of the world, a man, given up to indolence, is a weak and insignificant man. He is as if he was not. Dread, therefore, this defect, which is the source of so many others: watch and pray; but, above all things, watch against yourself.

LETTER XXIII.

Advice on Meditation, and the method of Reading.

I AM persuaded that you ought every morning to meditate a little in the following manner: first, place yourself in the presence

of God, that is, adore him as present, and offer yourself to him entirely; then invoke of him the help of his holy Spirit for the great business you are about. You know how we have proceeded when together: remember you cannot do it with too much simplicity. You are not to look for God in fine ideas, or extraordinary meltings of the heart. Speak to him simply, without much reflection, and from the fulness of your heart, as to a good friend.

At first, content yourself with a quarter of an hour in this meditation, although you should find it unprofitable and wearisome; but if it can be done without difficulty, and it nourishes your heart, go as far as half an hour. Generally speaking, it is best to do little at first, and to accustom yourself to it by degrees. In the evening you may do the same for another quarter of an hour, and you will find in time this other quarter will be lengthened to half an hour. You may finish with a disposition to give yourself up to God in those points you have meditated on, and by thanksgiving for the good affections you have received.

As to your spiritual reading, be not satisfied with believing and tasting the truths you read, but apply them to your wants. Endeavour, not only for your pleasure to taste, but to digest the heavenly bread, so that it may nourish you. Those who swallow with eagerness, and hastily, far from being sub-

stantially nourished, bring on dangerous indigestions. It is, therefore, better to read but little, and read it attentively, and with recollection. When reading improves you, it becomes a kind of meditation, whereas the reading of persons who are not simple enough, is but empty, and to very little purpose. Too great a variety of objects in spiritual reading, as in other things, dissipates the mind, prevents its entering into itself, and deprives it of its own nourishment.

LETTER XXIV.

I AM not surprised at the trouble you meet with from many things that are in opposition to God: it is the natural effect of the change of your heart. You wish to enjoy a certain calm, in which you might be at liberty to employ yourself in those things you are affected with, and be delivered from all that causes your wounds to bleed afresh. But God permits that what has formerly engaged your affections and your time, should now trouble you, and serve to increase your penitence. Bear then this cross in peace, and wait till God relieves you. He will do it in his own time, and not in yours. Nevertheless, reserve some portion of your time for thinking on him, and of yourself, with regard to him. Be upon your guard against your inclinations

and habits: remember you bear the gifts of God in an earthen vessel.

To perform many difficult actions is not the thing wanted: do the smallest and most common, with a heart devoted to God, and as a man who is desirous of answering the only end of his creation. You must be sober at table, and sober every where else, sober in talking, sober in your expenses, sober in judging, sober in your choice of company, sober in your amusements, and even sober in your wisdom and forecast, according to St. Paul's advice. It is this universal sobriety, in the use of the best things, that the love of God makes us observe; and to perform every thing with a delightful simplicity. They who are possessed of it, are neither fretful, nor scrupulous; but have within them a principle of love, which sets the heart at liberty; which sweetens every thing, and without restraint or trouble, inspires us with a certain delicacy never to displease God, and which stops us when we are tempted to do wrong.

In this state we endure what is the common lot of men; fatigues, disappointments, difficulties with ourselves as well as with others, temptations, and dejections. But if our crosses are in common with the world, the motives for bearing them are very different. We know in Jesus Christ our Saviour the value and power of the cross: it purifies, detaches us from the world, and renews our minds. We see God in all things;

but we never see him so clearly, nor with so much advantage, as in our sufferings and humiliations. The cross is the power of God; the more it destroys us, the more it advances the new being in Jesus Christ, to raise a new man out of the ruins of the old Adam.

If you can find out some sensible friend, who fears God, unburden your heart, by telling him such things as you think him capable of bearing. But consider God as the good friend of the heart, and that nobody can comfort like him. There is none who, like him, understands all at once, who enters into all our troubles, and adapts himself to our necessities before we ask him.

Show an even sober conduct, without the affectation of what is good; but be resolute in virtue, that the profligate may have no hopes of drawing you aside: you will the easier get rid of them, and they will importune you less, when they find you faithfully attached to religion; and that you will not be drawn back from it.

Rely not on your own strength, your resolutions, nor on your most vigilant precautions (which however you ought to take with the greatest exactness and care) but solely in the goodness of God, who has loved you before you loved him, and even when you ungratefully offended him.

LETTER XXV.

I HOPE, that in this state of separation and bitterness, you will find (far from the help of the creatures) the most powerful consolation. God will make you taste what he is in himself, when every thing else fails you. When we resign ourselves up to God, in time of peace and quiet, we neither know what we want, nor what we promise: though our resignation should be sincere, yet it is very superficial; but when the cup of bitterness presents itself to us, nature trembles, it fears, and is sorrowful; it says, *Let this cup pass from me!* Blessed are they who can suppress this repugnance, and say with the Son of God, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

The state of sorrow which dejects your heart, and the sight of an afflicting object, which is always before your eyes, makes me fear for your health. Take care of it, and turn to advantage any little comforts, that shall come in your way: do every thing in simplicity.

LETTER XXVI.

A VARIETY of business hurries you away with rapidity. I have often observed, that you are always in a hurry to go from

one business to another, though each in particular engages you too much. You are not slow, but tedious. You waste a great deal of time on each business, not through the slowness of your operations, for on the contrary they are hurried; but by the multitude of affairs you crowd into them. You wish to say every thing on each subject that has any relation to it. You always fear you do not say enough. This makes each business too long, and obliges you to pass from one affair to another, in haste, and yet with delay. If you would cut them short, each business would be easy, and find its place without being retarded: but in order to this, you should study to retrench every thing that is not essential.

To be sober in words, you must be so in thoughts. You must not follow your natural eagerness to persuade others. You will not reach the source of this evil, but by often silencing your spirit by means of inward silence. Thus you would see, at the proper season, each business in a clear and simple light. You would say in two words all you had to say, without losing so much time to persuade. You would be less burdened, more at liberty, more easy, more regular, and steady with regard to yourself and your neighbour. Besides, this silence, which would shorten the manner of expediting your outward business, would accustom you to transact your affairs in the spirit of prayer: without this you will be more and more fa-

tigued and exhausted; the affairs which prejudice the soul in its inward business, will likewise prejudice the health of the body.

This calm and leisure will do all your business, which hard labour and hurry can never effect. Listen a little less to your thoughts, that you may be in a state to listen more to God. I dare promise, if you observe this, and are faithful to the inward light on all occasions, you will soon be eased in all your duties; be fitter to serve your neighbour; and at the same time carry on the business of your employment better.

It is not enough that you love good books; you should yourself be a living good book. You should be inwardly in reality what these good books teach. The saints, in former times, had more troubles and crosses than you: it was in the midst of all these troubles they preserved and increased their peace, their simplicity, their life of pure faith, and their prayer almost without ceasing.

Reserve to yourself times for inward nourishment, which may be as sources of grace for other times: even in transacting your outward affairs, move in peace with that spirit of brevity which will cause you to die to yourself.

LETTER XXVII.

Consolation on the Death of a young Person.

I RECEIVED your letter on the loss you have lately sustained. I have a deep sense both of the loss, and the grief it occasions. But I cannot be troubled for your heart, not doubting but it remains in that true peace, which is inseparable from an acquiescence with the whole will of God. I pity you on account of this secret wound, by which the heart is at were dried up. But grief is the hidden life of souls here on earth; for it is by those thoughts which death occasions, that the beginning of a new life is formed in us. All that seems to corrupt the grain in the earth, makes it vegetate and grow up for the harvest.

LETTER XXVIII.

Consolation on the Death of a Son.

THE great loss you have sustained escapes not my sight; but God has taken what belonged to him, and not to us. Who dare say to him, Why hast thou done thus? This language is far from you. You know he is not accountable for what he doeth.

His good pleasure is the supreme reason; besides, we may always see, in the most severe strokes of his fatherly hand, a secret design of mercy. He takes away in a happy hour certain weak men, whom perhaps the delusions of the world might have caused to fall. He is hasted away to prevent a miserable fall. O what wonders shall we see in the next world, that escape us in this! then shall we sing the song of joy and everlasting thanks, for events that made us weep here. Alas! in the present darkness, we know not what is really good for us, or really evil. If God should do what pleases us, all would be lost. He saves us by breaking our chains, and making us sorrowful. The same stroke that saves him we love, by taking him from the midst of iniquity, prepares us by his death for our own. What can we desire for ourselves and our friends in this vain and corrupted world? If it be true that faith and love constitute the life of our soul, can we weep, because God loves us better than we know how to love ourselves; shall we lament his taking out of temptation and sin, those that are dear to us? Does he hurt us by contracting the days of misery? Do we desire a continuance of danger, and greater temptations? We would have every thing that flatters self-love, in order to make us forget ourselves in this place of exile.

Your son was prosperous in the midst of a corrupted world; it is this afflicts you in the

loss of him. But his success was perhaps the cause that the thread of his life was cut short, by a design replete with mercy, both for him and his friends. Let us then adore God, and be silent. Nothing but prayer can comfort us. As soon as we are with God, by an union of heart in the simple view of faith, we are in prayer. And every occupation, even in the most holy things, that does not place us in this presence, and this society of love, is rather a study than a prayer. At this time nothing but the society of the true Comforter can comfort us. Let us then rest in silence; he will comfort us, and we shall find all in him alone. Blessed are those who desire no other comfort! This is pure and inexhaustible.

LETTER XXIX.

IT seems to me necessary that you should have joined together great strictness, and great liberty. Strictness will make you faithful, and liberty will make you courageous. If you were strict without being at liberty, there would be a danger of falling into slavery, and unnecessary scruples; and if you were at liberty without being strict, you would soon run into negligence and remissness of manners. Strictness alone contracts the mind, and liberty alone enlarges it too much. Those who have no experience in the ways of God, think these two

virtues incompatible. They understand by being strict, a living always in restraint, and in an uneasy scrupulous fear, which so straitens the soul that it quarrels with itself about the smallest matters. They call being at liberty, the having a loose conscience, not being careful of small matters, but content with avoiding great faults, counting such only great crimes; quieting and comforting themselves with this thought, that they do not imagine there is any great harm in their actions.

It was not thus St. Paul conceived matters, when he said to those, whom he endeavoured to make perfect Christians, *Stand fast in liberty*; but it is in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free: *stand fast in liberty;* because the Saviour hath called us to liberty; but let not that liberty be an occasion or pretence for doing wrong. It seems then to me that true strictness consists in obeying God in all things, and following that light which shows us our duty, and that grace which inclines us to do it; making it our chief study to please God in all things, and always to do not only what is agreeable to him, but what is most so without endeavouring to deceive him by the difference of great and small sins of omission or commission. For though it is true there is a distinction in these things, yet there ought to be none for a soul that has concluded to refuse nothing to God, of all that it has to bestow. And it is in this sense the

apostle says, that *the law is not made for a righteous man;* that is, the restraining and threatening law: but he has a superior law which raises him above all this, and makes him enter into the liberty of the children of God; which is the desire of always pleasing his heavenly Father.

LETTER XXX.

AVOID dissipation, and dread your too lively imagination and taste for the world. It is not sufficient that you avoid seeing too many people, you must likewise not suffer your vivacity to be too much excited by the few you do see: you must retrench all long conversations; and even in short ones, you should not indulge a certain activity of spirit, which is incompatible with recollection.

What I require is an union with God, at the bottom of the heart, which his grace affords us, when we drop our own activity that dissipates us, and diverts us with creaturely amusements. Indeed, if you do not drop this activity, which proceeds from nature and habit, you will insensibly lose all that is good within you: and notwithstanding your pious intentions, you will find yourself reduced to a devotion of transitory and superficial sentiments, accompanied with

great frailties, and a mixture of many things contrary to former grace.

LETTER XXXI.

THE best reparation for our past vanities, is being humble and content that God should humble us. The best of all penances is, to do, daily and hourly, the will of God rather than our own. Let us then think only of the present, and not be inquisitive about the future. This future is not ours, and perhaps never may be. Let us only think of the present which presses on us; it is a fidelity to the present that prepares us for being faithful in the future. With regard to the present, these are what appear to me to be the principal.

First. I think you should avoid all company that might not only lead you into gross errors, but awaken in you a taste for worldly vanities, dissipate you, and render you lukewarm towards God, dry up your heart for spiritual exercises, and destroy your willingness to attend to the advice you stand in need of. It is a happiness to be removed far from the world, and placed in the liberty of the children of God.

Nevertheless, it is not fitting, either with regard to decency or your station, or to your inward wants, that you should retire into a

deep solitude. You must then, when it is necessary to relax your mind, see those who afford you a moderate amusement; but avoid such company as tends to dissipate, slacken, and draw you away, contrary to your own liking, and who would cause the old wounds of your heart to bleed afresh. These false friends you should dread, avoid them quietly, and put a bar in the way to prevent their return.

With regard to prayer, you cannot do wrong in the good disposition which God has given you, provided you are not too much aiming to perform it in an excellent manner. Seek for an acquaintance with God, not by artful thoughts which you frame on purpose to speak to him, for a certain time, but by those sentiments with which your heart is filled. If you taste his presence, and feel the attraction of love, acknowledge your happiness, and that it is great goodness in the Almighty to suffer himself to be loved by a heart so unworthy of his love.

Employ yourself during the day in the duties of your state; such as regulating your expenses according to your income, watching over your servants that they commit no offence; educating your children with a mild authority; satisfying the obligations of decency; and edifying all who see you, though you never speak to them of devotion.

All this is simple, regular, and moderate, and enters into common life; but all reverts continually to God. How comfortable will

you find the practice of it! *One day in the house of God is better than a thousand in the tents of ungodliness.* Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

LETTER XXXII.

YOU must not believe that the presence of God is imaginary, when it does not give you the light and power to say fine things. This presence is never more real or more beneficial than when it teaches us to be silent, to humble ourselves, not to hearken to self-love, and to remain with lowliness and fidelity in the obscurity of faith. This taste of self-renunciation and lowliness, is much more profitable than bright ideas, and lively sentiments.

LETTER XXXIII.

WE should turn our defects to advantage, by an entire diffidence of our own hearts. I am glad you do not find in yourself any resource, to enable you to sustain that kind of life you have made choice of. I should fear all things for you, if you thought yourself established in what is good, and if you promised to persevere in it; but I hope all things, when I see that you sincerely despair of yourself. O how weak are we, when

we think ourselves strong! O how strong are we in God, when we feel ourselves weak!

It is the will which God requires; the will must be attended with action, but God frequently does not require great performances from us. To order our servants, to manage our affairs well, to educate our children properly, to bear our crosses, to fly from the vain joys of the world; not to flatter our pride in any thing; to suppress our natural haughtiness; to endeavour to become simple, plain, and lowly; to be silent; to be recollected; and to accustom ourselves to a life hidden with Jesus Christ in God; these are the works with which God is pleased.*

You wish, you say, for crosses to evidence your love for God. Be content with your present crosses: before you look for others, bear those you have with patience; listen not to what you like or dislike. Endeavour to keep yourself, on all occasions, in that general disposition of unreserved dependance on the spirit of grace, which is a continual death to self. Refuse nothing to God, and never anticipate him, with regard to those things in which you are as yet ignorant of his will. Each day will bring its crosses and its sacrifices. When God shall please to change your state, he will insensibly prepare you for it. My wish is, that God may destroy in you the whole life of self-love.

* Only to be performed by the help of his grace.

LETTER XXXIV.

IT is the Spirit of God that insensibly accomplishes the most arduous things. The disappointments of life overcome us; its crosses deject us; we want patience and gentleness, or a gentle and steady courage, to render us capable to persuade others. God alone holds in his hand the hearts of men: he supports ours, and opens our neighbours. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.* Ps. cxxvii. 1. By depending on the spirit of grace, you will do more in your outward duties, than by all your uneasy and eager strivings.

I bless God for it, that you are tired of your own spirit. Woe to those who confide in it. Blessed are they who, being weary of it, seek repose in the renunciation of self-love. If after having tasted the goodness of God in retirement, you should return to what the world esteems an honest life, you will fall very low; and, by a remissness so unfaithful to grace, will deserve such a loss. I hope this will not attend you; God loves you well, seeing he gives you no peace in a medium between him and the world. God calls us to all perfection, and prepares us for it by the attraction of his grace: wherefore Jesus Christ says to his disciples, *Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.* Matthew iv. 48. And on this account he has taught us to pray,

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Matt. vi. 10. All are called to this perfection on earth; but the generality are dismayed, and draw back.

Be not of the number of those who, having eaten of the manna in the wilderness, regretted the loss of the onions of Egypt. It is perseverance alone that is crowned.

LETTER XXXV.

THE work of God is not done in us, but by dispossessing us of ourselves, so as to remove every resource of confidence and complacency in self-love. You wish to find yourself good, upright, strong, and incapable of every thing that is bad. If you should find yourself in this state, you would be so much the worse, as you imagined yourself good. We should see ourselves poor, find nothing in ourselves but misery, despair of self, hope for nothing but in God, and exercise an humble patience without flattery. As to any thing else, as these things which trouble you are but involuntary sentiments, it suffices that the will is not consenting to them. By this you will gain the advantage of humiliation, without having the infidelity of adhering to such corrupt sentiments.

Live in Jesus Christ, and live for him. The chief thing for you is littleness: reserve nothing through courage, or human wisdom.

Be tractable. Learn to bear with others, by being reduced to bear with yourself.

LETTER XXXVI.

To endeavour to raise ourselves up from the Remissness into which we have fallen.

I CANNOT, my dear daughter, say any thing more proper to you than the words of St. John to the angel, that is, the bishop of the church of Ephesus:....*Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent; and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.* It is thus the Spirit of God loves men without flattering them; he loves them, and threatens them. He does not even threaten them but through love. He alarms them with the view of trouble, to the end that men may not compel him to make them suffer. See how the most perfect men easily and by degrees fall away without great watchfulness. Here is the angel of one of the most holy churches of the east, in those days, when religion was in so flourishing a state: this angel falls; he forgets his former love, his recollection, his prayer, his good works (in which he had formerly been employed) he grows remiss and dissipated. At first his wandering and

fall were imperceptible to himself. He says to himself, 'In what have I done wrong? 'Is not my conduct good and regular in the 'sight of the world? Is not some consola- 'tion requisite?'

Thus are we ingenious to deceive ourselves, and disguise our remissness. The Holy Spirit says, 'Open your eyes, and see from 'whence you are fallen. You are fallen be- 'low your former place! Remember your 'peaceful solitude, your desire for recollec- 'tion, and your faithfulness in avoiding 'every thing that might disturb it. If you 'do not remember this, others have not for- 'gotten it. Where is now this fervor? 'There is nothing to be seen but amuse- 'ments without, and weariness within. 'When the amusements are over, you are 'like a different person.'

It is thus people fall by degrees, and under plausible pretences, from a state of sincere death to self, into a remissness, where they see spring up again the grossest properties of self-love. You should reflect on the state from whence you are fallen. You should regret the loss of that first love which nourished your heart, and return to your first works, which you have so slothfully abandoned for the works of vanity. You should say with the prodigal son, *I will arise, and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* If at first you find

any coldness in this path, receive it humbly, as a penance which you stand in great need of. If you fail to return quickly into his fatherly bosom, this is what he will do: *I will come*, says he, *and remove thy candlestick out of his place*. He will take from you the light you make no use of, and will leave you in darkness. He will remove you from his precious graces, which you have so long trampled under foot, and give them to some other soul who is more simple, more tractable, and more faithful. You must return to your reading, your prayers, your silence, your first simplicity, and lowliness.

LETTER XXXVII.

LOOK not futurity in the face: for we are bewildered and lost, when we dive into it. Our foresight only serves to disquiet us. Submit yourself daily. The submission of each day is the true daily bread. We are fed, like Jesus Christ, with the will of his Father, which Providence brings us for the present moment. This heavenly bread is like the manna. We must not lay it by in store. An uneasy and distrustful man, who would gather for the next day, would see it immediately corrupt.

Submit yourself in all things that are required of you. Be simple and lowly with-

out reasoning, prepared for every thing, and adhering to nothing; high, or low; praised, or dispraised; enjoying the confidence of those we live with, or being envied and suspected. Provided you have neither high-mindedness, self-wisdom, nor self-will in any thing, all will go well. This is a great deal, but not too much. Observe silence as much as you can, and mortify your spirit.

LETTER XXXVIII.

I AM pleased to learn from yourself, that you are preserved in obedience, and enjoy that peace of God, which is inseparable from it. God will take care of every thing for you. Depend on him alone, and you will find in him every thing that is agreeable to his Spirit....Remember the way of faith, which you have so much desired to follow, is not solid, but so far as it detaches us from persons, books and outward helps: in a word, from every thing that is not God, and his will. Once more then, be obedient; and observe silence as much as you can.

The service of God consists not in words, nor vague thoughts, nor insensible affections, nor elevated ideas; but in good works. To be silent, to obey, to restrain ourselves, to renounce in all the most difficult cases our own taste, as well as our will, to embrace

the cross, and think that by it alone we can find God, is the truth of the kingdom of God in us. This is worshipping him in spirit and in truth.

As to your defects, I am not surprised at them; but I thank God you see them without flattering yourself, or being discouraged by them. Always be courageous, and strive to conquer yourself: but do it without vexation, and without dependance on your own strength. Let your defects prove of advantage, by their humbling you, at the same time not delaying to correct them.

LETTER XXXIX.

I HOPE, my dear niece, that God, who has called you to train up your sisters, will deliver you from your own spirit, and give you his Spirit to perform his work. The work of God is love, and to die to yourself, that he alone may live in you. Ought you not to die to yourself, in order to help others to the same happy experience? Ought you not to love, in order to inspire others with love? No instruction is effectual, but by example. Begin then by doing, and afterwards you may instruct. Action speaks and persuades: words alone are but vanity.

Be patient with those who advance but slowly; there will be danger of discouraging them by your impatience: the more occasi-

on you have for power, the more care you must take to join with it mildness and consolation....Suffer: it is only by the cross we receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and his power to win souls. Superiors, without crosses, are barren to bring forth children of grace. A cross, well borne, acquires authority, and gives a blessing to all we do. It is by suffering we learn to have compassion, and to minister consolation. Speak little, hear much, think more of knowing the disposition of those under you, that you may proportion yourself to their necessities, than of saying fine things to them.

Show an openness of heart, and make each one see, by experience, that there is safety and consolation in opening her mind to you. Avoid all severity; correct even with mildness and discretion. Be slow in deciding, but be resolute.

Correct yourself, that you may be able to correct others. Let them tell you your faults, and believe what they say with regard to those which self-love may conceal from you.

LETTER XL.

YOUR want of health a little disturbs me; but I hope the country air, with some exercise, and true repose of mind, will restore it to you. As to myself, I am like a skeleton, that walks and speaks, but sleeps

and eats little. An extensive diocese is a heavy burden at sixty-three. I have a great deal too much business, and you have perhaps not enough to keep you from being weary: invent some employ, which may revive your spirits. The days are tedious, though the years are short.

Consider, if you were in the gay world, you would hear a great deal of wicked discourse; you would see many troublesome and despicable people with distinguished names; you would be surrounded with snares and infectious examples: you would not think seriously either of God, yourself, your death, nor your salvation: you would become, like others, intoxicated, and hardened. Is it not better to remain in some degree of affliction at a distance from the world, under the hand of God, who will make you taste the consolations of religion, and disengage you from the false satisfactions he deprives you of? The world only gives pleasures of vanity. Besides, it is full of thorns, troubles, ungenerous proceedings, and deceitful people; we must be very much depraved, when living far from evil is painful to us. For three or four years, I saw here a great part of the army, and the court. Though I had many instances of their civility, I find myself much eased by their absence.

Shake off the yoke of superfluity; be rich without money. You are happy if you despise, for the love of God, all you are not in possession of.

EXTRACTS

FROM

LETTERS,

PUBLISHED 1777.

LETTER I.

THE loss which we have had of so many relations and friends, my dear sister, declares to us that this life is only borrowed, and that God alone essentially possesseth immortality. What ought to be our comfort is, that we shall be re-united in him, if we attach ourselves constantly to him.

The troubles you speak of ought to be more precious than pleasures, if you have faith. Calvary is in this world the general station of a Christian; and if he sometimes mounts upon Tabor, it is only for an instant.

I am very glad to have such good accounts of little Michael. It is a plant, which will produce excellent fruit, if carefully cultivated. Much depends on a happy culture. We become every thing or nothing, according to the education we receive.

You regret that we do not see one another; but neither our figures nor our words form our friendship: provided our affections and thoughts unite us, what signifies our persons being at a distance? When we love one another in God, we see one another always, for God is every where: he ought to be the centre of all our sentiments, as he is of our souls.

I embrace you most cordially, and set an high value on your letters; they recal the memory of a father I knew but too little, and of a mother whose life was a constant lesson of virtue. I am beyond all expression a most affectionate, &c.

LETTER II.

EVERY person who is truly pious, is patient, gentle, and humble; unspecting of ill, never splenetic, and conceals, when he cannot excuse, the faults of his neighbour.

True devotion is charity, and without it nothing we can do is of use to salvation. False devotees do little less injury to the cause of religion, than the openly profane; always ready to kindle against those who do not agree with them in their humours and opinions, they are agitated by a restless, impetuous, persecuting zeal; and are commonly either fanatical or superstitious, hypocrites, or ignorant. Jesus Christ does not

spare them in the gospel, that he may teach us to be on our guard against them.

Jan. 2, 1749.

LETTER III.

I WAS too much the friend of your father, and am too much your friend, to suffer you to go astray as you now do, without recalling you to yourself. Is it possible that that dear child, whom I have seen so gentle, good and virtuous in his father's house, has so totally forgot what he was, as to become rude, insolent, and irreligious? It is with the utmost difficulty I can persuade myself that it is so; but I am so often assured of it, and by the company with whom you associate, that I can no longer doubt.

I beg of you to come and see me, and in the effusions of a heart which tenderly loves you, I will say to you, not what anger inspires, not what prejudice suggests, not what is bitter in reproaches, but all the sincerest attachment can dictate, to withdraw you from that abyss into which bad company has hurried you.

You will neither find me an imperious monitor, nor an angry pedagogue, but a friend, a brother, who will speak to you as he would to himself, with the same lenity and the same calmness. I know that youth is fiery, and that there is great difficulty in

escaping from the ways of the world, when we are rich, and given up to passions. But do not honour, decency, reason, and religion speak more powerfully than the appetites and senses.

What is man, my dear friend, if he takes no counsel but of his corrupted heart? Alas! I find within me, as well as you find in yourself, wherewithal to lead me astray, if I did not hearken to my conscience and my duty; for illusion and corruption are the only portions of humanity.

I expect you with the greatest impatience, to stretch forth my arms, and embrace you. We will bewail together the loss of a father, who was so necessary to you; I will endeavour to give you such advice, as to make him live again in you, by the excellence of your morals. Do not disgrace his memory, by the scandal of a disorderly life.

If you will deign to hearken to me, I am confident, that the plan of life which I shall trace out to you, will restore every thing as it should be. Do not be afraid; God will inspire us: God does not abandon those who return to him.

I shall not go abroad to-morrow, that I may receive you.

LETTER IV.

IS it possible, my dear sir, that you not only did not come to me, as I requested you would, but that you took care to be denied when I came to see you? Alas! what would your father say, to whom you promised in his dying moments, that you would place entire confidence in my advice, and that you would always make it your duty to cultivate my friendship? Once more, what would he say? Am not I the same person who have carried you so often in my arms, who with the greatest pleasure have seen you growing, who have given you your first instructions, and to whom you have testified the strongest attachment?

Would you have me fall upon my knees, to induce you to restore to me your friendship? I will do so;...nothing shall be too much for me, when I am to recal a friend to his duty.

If you had not a noble heart, and a good understanding, I should despair of your reformation, and of my own advice; but you have inherited a soul formed for virtue, and an uncommon sagacity. Do you imagine that it can be a pleasure to me to find fault with you? None but false devotees find satisfaction in putting themselves into a passion. I have happily read the gospel, which is the rule both of your conduct and mine, enough to know how Jesus Christ received

sinners, and how attentive we ought to be not to extinguish the smoking lamp, nor to break the bruised reed. I have not forgot that John the Evangelist got on horseback, notwithstanding his advanced age, to search after a young man whom he had bred up, and who avoided him. Besides, have not you long known me for a man who is neither haughty nor peevish, and who can compassionate human frailty? The more you avoid me, the more I shall think you guilty. Do not hearken to your companions, but let your heart speak, and I shall instantly see you. Mine prompts me never to abandon you; I will persecute you because I love you, and I will give you no rest till we are reconciled.

It is because I am your best friend that I seek to find you, at a time when scarce any of your relations will hear your name mentioned.

If you dread my remonstrances, I shall say nothing to you, because I shall be convinced that you will accuse yourself, and allow me no time to speak; try at least one visit; and if that is not agreeable, you shall not see me more. But I know your heart, I know my own, and I am certain that after one interview, you will have no desire to leave me.

I ought to have a greater ascendency over your mind, who have known you these twenty years, than all the young associates who surround you, to devour your estate,

and are your friends only to ruin your health and reputation.

If my tears can affect you, I assure you they flow at this instant, and from the most precious motives in the world; religion and friendship. Come and dry them up, it will prove to me that you still remember your father, and are sensible to the distress of a friend.

Feb. 1, 1750.

LETTER V.

IT is not easily expressed, my dearest friend, how much your three visits have comforted my soul. The tears you shed in my presence; the affecting manner in which you promised me to amend your past life, and endeavour seriously to re-enter into favour with God; can never be effaced from my memory, nor from my heart.

I always said to myself, 'He hath had a 'Christian education; he will return to his 'duty; I shall see him again; his wanderings 'are but a storm, which will disperse.' God be praised, the calm is returned! It is not to me, but to him alone, that you should be thankful.

Since you wish that I should lay down a plan to guide you, I shall simply trace out such a one as my weak understanding, but strong friendship, inspires. It shall be short.

The commandments of God may be reduced to a few words. Precepts that are clear and founded upon reason, as well as happiness, have no need of commentary or dissertation.

Read every morning the parable of the Prodigal Son, and likewise some religious books in the course of the day; not like a slave to finish his task, but as a child of God, who returns to his father, and hopes every thing from his mercy.

Make it a duty to scatter some charities every day into the bosoms of the poor, that you may repair the wrongs you have done them, in squandering on criminal pleasures and superfluities what was due to them. Renounce those companions who have estranged you from God, from yourself, and from your true friends; and form such new connections as honour, decency, and religion, may avow. It is easy to dismiss debauched associates, without affronting them. Speak openly to them of the plan of life you mean to pursue; propose to them to follow it; talk to them only of regretting the past, and forming good resolutions for the future; and they will soon disappear: or, if they return, it will be a proof that they have altered their conduct; and, then instead of shunning them, receive them with more pleasure than ever.

Take an exact account of your debts and your income, and by your economy you will

find wherewith to pay your creditors. A man is always rich, when he is in the habit of depriving himself of indulgences; as he is always poor, while he refuses himself nothing.

When opportunities offer of enjoying a little society, do not refuse them; because you may be properly employed there, and because you will be secured from the raillery of the world, which is fond of turning piety into ridicule.

Dismiss the servants who were accomplices in your intrigues, and sharers in your guilt. Although, after having exposed them to scandal, it would be proper to set them a good example; yet it is to be dreaded, from the knowledge of your weakness, that they might lay snares to lead you back into the road of perdition.

With your new domestics, whose abilities and fidelity have been properly recommended to you, you should live as a master who knows the duties of humanity; as a Christian who knows that we are equal in the sight of God, notwithstanding the inequality of conditions. You will set them none but good examples; watch over their manners, without either being a tyrant or a spy; and attach them to you by your gentleness and your beneficence. Nothing can be so flattering as to render those happy who live with us.

You must think of taking some charge upon you, which will give you employment.

We always do amiss when we do nothing. Examine your understanding, consult your taste, ask your heart; but above all, address yourself to God, that you may know what is fit for you.

Your friends will think of marrying you, and it is my advice not to defer it too long. Marriage, when made with purity of heart, preserves young people from a multitude of dangers; but do not reckon upon my chusing a wife for you. Your relation, with whom I have happily reconciled you, is a man of sense, honesty, and integrity, and in a situation to marry you properly. Religion and reason ought to be consulted more than inclination, in an establisment that is to last for life. We rarely see marriages happy, which have no other motive than love.

I do not speak to you of your expenses, nor of your table: with such principles as I laid down, they must be moderate.

Above all things, let there be no excess in your piety: take no violent courses; they will be a means of your relapsing. The wounds of the soul are not to be healed by a hasty repetition of prayers, but by labouring to reform the heart. The generality of sinners, for want of this method, pass their lives in offending God, and then confessing their sins.

Avoid the hypocrite as well as the dissipated; both the one and the other will hinder you from arriving at the point we pro-

pose. I will not look upon you as a convert, till you have been a long time proved. It is not easy to pass from libertinism to the practice of virtue.

Behold, my dear son, my dearest friend, what I thought is my duty to sketch out for you. I could not use more tenderness, if you were my own. It will trouble me greatly, if the resolutions you so lately entered into, in my presence, should vanish. What encourages me is, that you are a man of truth, that you have a regard for me, and are fully convinced that I sincerely wish you well; and in the last place, that you have found a disorderly life to be an assemblage of vexation, torment, and remorse.

Hearken to the voice of a father crying to you as from the bottom of the tomb, that there is no happiness in this world but for the friends of God; and charging you to keep the promise you formerly made to him, of living, with the help of heaven, the life of a good Christian.

Nov. 20, 1750.

LETTER VI.

MADAM,

IT is undoubtedly very distressing to your dear relation, that you will not be reconciled to him, notwithstanding his visit,

and the humble and affecting letter he has written to you. Is it thus God Almighty deals with us? What will the world think of your piety, when they see you so exasperated as to reject the prodigal son? For my part, I flew to him as soon as I knew that he was gone astray, and I hope God will reward me for it.

You are always repeating, Madam, that he has lost a great deal of money, and that he is a bad man. But what is even the loss of gold, that you should so much regret it. You ought only to be grieved at the abuse of so many good qualities as he possesses; and think, if he is really a bad man, that he has more need than ever of advice, and the example of the truly good.

It is having a very bad idea of religion, to forsake a young man, because he has committed some errors.

Ah! how do you know, that this bad man will not next day be acceptable in the sight of God, while your services may by no means please him; for truly one grain of pride is sufficient to spoil the best actions. The Pharisee, who fasted two days in the week, was rejected; and the Publican, who humbled himself, was justified.

Charity, with regard to all men, and always charity! This I shall never cease to repeat, as perfectly agreeable to the morals taught in every Christian school.

If the mercy of God depended upon certain devotees, sinners would be much to be pitied: false devotion knows nothing but an exterminating zeal; while God, full of patience, gentleness, and forbearance, waits the amendment of all those who have gone astray.

Even the blood of Christ implores your forgiveness; and it is not having a proper respect for him, to refuse your dear relation admittance into your house. You are not ignorant that there is more joy in heaven over *one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance.* Besides, will you continue your resentment, while the angels rejoice? that would be a shocking sort of piety indeed!

It is not for us to decide, whether the heart of a man, who appears to have entered seriously into himself, is truly changed. Besides, as God alone can know the truth, we ought to presume that he has reformed. Would you think it just in your neighbours, who are the witnesses of your good works, if they supposed that you acted only from pride? Let us leave to the Searcher of all hearts to pronounce what are the motives of our actions. The brother of the prodigal son is condemned in the eyes of religion and humanity, for not being properly affected at his return.

If my letter, contrary to my intention, appears a little severe, I beg you will think I speak in such a manner, less on your rela-

tion's account than your own; for your salvation depends upon it. Will you not pardon him, when you have reason to presume that God Almighty hath pardoned him? I cannot think it.

I am with respect, &c.

Feb. 5, 1751.

LETTER VII.

THE Seas will very soon separate us; but such is the lot of this life, that some are scattered to the extremities of the world, while others remain always in the same place.

If you have not laid in an ample stock of piety, I shall be exceedingly in fear for you, on a passage where all the words you hear will not be those of edification; and in a country where all the examples presented to you, will not be found the most correct models of virtue. America is the earthly paradise, where they frequently eat the forbidden fruit. The serpent is continually preaching upon the love of riches and pleasures, and the warmth of the climate sets the passions in commotion.

We are not able to restrain our passions when we perceive no other superior but God, unless a lively faith be the principle of our actions.

I persuade myself, that you will frequently beg of God to give you strength to sup-

port you against all kinds of dangers. Think that he will be as near you in America as in Europe ; that his eye seeth every where ; his justice judgeth all ; and that it is for him you ought to act. Lead a diligent and regular life ; for, should you once be possessed with a spirit of indolence, you will soon be beset by the vices, without being able to defend yourself.

Never suffer one word to pass your lips which can be interpreted against religion or morals. Even those who seemingly applaud, will, in fact, despise you.

I will pray for you to him who commands the waves, who calms the tempests, and who doth not abandon his people wherever found. What comforts me is, that souls know no distance ; for by the ties of religion and the heart, we are always neighbours to one another.

Adieu, and adieu !...I tenderly embrace you !

LETTER VIII.

WELL, my dear friend, what are you doing ? It is a long time since I saw you : I certainly do not deserve to be deprived of that pleasure....You know that I willingly quit my pen, my employment, and my books, when you come to see me.

They who come to visit us, have no occasion for our studies, nor our business. I have always made it a law to receive every person well who honours me with a visit, even the man that comes to importune me: it is sufficient that he is my neighbour. Now judge, after this, if you will be well received.

It is almost eighteen days since I saw——. I am afraid, but I dare not tell you, that—— the art of being silent is a great virtue: happy they who say nothing but what they ought to speak! Accustom yourself to be secret, without affecting discretion. Never employ finesse; it is a wretched resource, incompatible with probity, and easily discovered.

I will tell you more when we meet; but let it be soon.

I am, without reserve, your servant and best friend.

LETTER IX.

THE education you propose giving your children, will be only a varnish, if it is not founded on religion. There are some occasions, in the course of life, where probity is not sufficiently strong to resist certain temptations; and where the soul is debased, if it is not elevated by the firm belief of immortality.

It is necessary for the wisdom and happiness of man, that he should have a view

of the Deity from his tenderest infancy, as the principle and the end of all things: and reason and faith should tell him, that it is descending to the rank of beasts to be without either worship or law.

It is not by an attention to trifling ceremonies, that you will make your children true Christians. Christianity is the greatest enemy to pharisaical zeal and superstition.

You should take a geat deal of pains to elevate the souls of your three young people, and to convince them, that the greatest pleasure of man is to reflect, and to be conscious of his existence. This is a pleasure so sublime, and so worthy of an heavenly spirit, that I look upon him who knows not this happiness, as a wretched, or, at least, an insensible being.

A few, but solid books, will make your children well-informed Christians. Let them be read less with an intention to fix them in the memory, than to grave them on the heart. It is not necessary to form young people to defend a thesis, but to be obliged, as rational creatures, to convince themselves of eternal truths.

You should watch carefully to preserve them spotless, not by employing informers and spies, but by having your ears and your eyes every where to imitate the Deity, whom we do not see, but who seeth over all.

Be less the master than the friend of your children; and then they will be transparent

to your eyes, and even tell their faults themselves. Young folks have often told me their griefs and their errors, because I always treat them with mildness. They will give you the key of their hearts, when they find that you sincerely wish them well, and that it is a pain to you to reprove them.

Take care what servants you admit about your children; it is generally through them that you are corrupted.

Manage so as to have an amiable serenity constantly shining on your face, and in your eyes; and that every thing be done as you would have it, without restraint or fear.

Attach pleasures to every kind of study which you propose for your sons, by exciting a desire of knowledge, and an impatience of ignorance.

Take care that they have relaxation from their studies, that their memories and judgments may not grow tired.

Instruct them, by making them love your documents, not by the fear of punishments; and for this purpose take care to enliven them by some little histories, which may awaken attention.

Learning is like food. The stomach of a child requires light nourishment; and it is only by degrees that he is accustomed to more solid or substantial diet.

When your children have acquired the age of maturity, then is the time to speak to them, as a friend, of the nothingness of the pleasures in which the world places its hap-

piness ; of the misfortunes in which they engage us ; the remorse they excite ; the injury they do both to body and soul ; the abyss they dig under our steps, while they appear only to scatter flowers. It will be no difficult matter for you to point out to them the dangerous rocks of sensuality, by expressions or striking examples ; and to persuade them, that without idleness, the greater part of the pleasures, to which people addict themselves so immoderately, would have no attractions. In idleness, as in sleep, they form to themselves the most brilliant ideas, and represent many agreeable chimeras which have no existence.

When a son is persuaded that a father talks only reason to him, and solely from tenderness, he hearkens to him, and his advice produces the best effects.

Lastly, after having erected this edifice, there still remains what is difficult to determine ; I mean the choice of a profession. This is commonly the touchstone of fathers and mothers, and the most critical point for children. If you will be persuaded by me, you will give them a year to themselves to reflect upon the kind of life that suits them ; before you speak to them of one employment in preference to another. The good education they will have received, the knowledge they will have acquired, will naturally lead them to a happy issue ; and there will be good reason to hope they will then decide for them-

selves, according to their inclinations, and according to reason.

It will then be necessary to speak frequently to them of the advantages and disadvantages of the different conditions of life, and to let them know how much their temporal and eternal interest is concerned in the faithful discharge of their duty.

After these precautions, and after having often implored the assistance of heaven, your sons will enter steadily upon the plan of life they have chosen; and you will have the consolation of being able to say, that you have regarded their inclinations, and their liberty.

Since Providence has given you wealth, you should support your sons according to their condition; letting them, however, always feel some wants, and keeping them always within the bounds of moderation, to teach them, that this life is not the state of our happiness, and that the higher they are raised, the less ought they to become proud. Take care to give them money, that they may learn from yourself not to become misers, and that they may have it in their power to assist the unfortunate. It will be proper to observe, with your own eyes, the use they make of it; and if you find them addicted either to avarice or prodigality, you should lessen their allowance.

Lastly, my dear and respectable friend, attend more to the hearts than the understandings of your sons: if the heart is good, all

will go well. Circumstances must teach you how to govern them; you should appear sometimes indulgent, at other times severe, but always just and candid. Those young people who will not be wise, are distressed when they are reproved with a spirit of equity, because they find, against their inclination, they cannot reply.

Leave them a liberal freedom, so that their father's house may not be their last choice; it is necessary that they should be happier there than elsewhere, and find those pleasures which may reasonably be expected from a parent, who, though a friend to order, is indulgent from affection.

May God heap his blessings upon them! The education which you will give them must blossom to eternity. There it is that parents reap the fruit of the good advice they have given to their children, and that worthy fathers find themselves with their worthy sons, to be for ever happy.

Aug. 16, 1753.

LETTER X.

WHAT has been said with regard to the person in question, is only founded on envy and malice. Is there a man in office, or a man who hath written, that has not enemies? Libels and satires make an impression only upon weak heads; and you will ob-

serve, that the most vicious and spotted characters are always most ready to believe calumny, and shew the greatest reluctance to see those whom they have offended.

Prejudice, however, is so common, that many recommendations are wanted to determine a man in office in favour of any person; but there needs one word only to make him change, or to provoke him. This is the strongest proof of the depravity of the human heart.

We should be obliged to see nobody, were we to shut our doors against all who have been ill spoken of. We ought to be very careful to avoid judging rashly. It is shameful to pass sentence against our brother, when we have not sufficient proofs to accuse him.

Many think they ought piously to give credit to all the evil which is spoken of their neighbour. They pretend to be ignorant that God hath expressly commanded us not to judge, lest we be judged; and that it is less criminal in his eyes, to commit faults which we repent of, than to accuse our brethren rashly.

The first rule of Christian charity is to believe no ill, if we have not seen it; and not to publish it, if we have seen it. Besides, if he whom they would prevent you from seeing, seeks the society of good people, it is a proof he is not such a libertine, as they pretend, or that he is inclined to reform. Perhaps his salvation depends

upon the good example you will set him; therefore I would not have you reject him.

Charity does not judge like the world; because the world almost never fails to judge amiss.

LETTER XI.

THE giving of alms is not sufficient to please God, for charity extends over all; you should not oppress your tenants, nor molest your vassals: they who with the greatest severity exact trifles, which they ought to despise, have not a proper sense of religion. Christianity is unacquainted with that sordid interest which is attentive to little things; and they have only the bark who are always upon the watch with their tenants, for fear of being cheated. The heart is become too earthly, when it is over-anxious about worldly matters.

Why torment yourself so solicitously about the things that perish? The kingdom of Jesus Christ should have worshippers in spirit and in truth, whose hearts are not contracted by a self-interested conduct, and views merely carnal.

I am troubled when I see people of fortune living in dread of want, and, though very rich, often much more attached to a dirty piece of gold than a poor labourer would be.

I dare add, Sir, that all your works of devotion will be absolutely useless, if you do not detach yourself entirely from the things of this world; and cease to be the tyrant of your debtors, by a greediness after riches. It is better to forego a right, than to recover it by oppression. The spirit of justice, which you plead in your favour, has no connection with continual distrust, with apprehensions about future want, and frequent wranglings.

If there are some disputes between you and your tenants, settle them more to their advantage than your own; it is conformable to the advice of Jesus Christ, who orders us, if they ask our cloak, to give our coat also. All your superfluities, and even a part of your necessaries, on urgent occasions, belong to the poor; so that you will be guilty if you accumulate. These are harsh truths, but the law was not made by me.

LETTER XII.

AT sight of the ideas, with which you have filled the work which you have communicated to me, my thoughts upon that subject were roused, and, according to my slender abilities, I formed an idea of man, such as he is, and such as he ought to be. I see him at one and the same time, so lit-

tle, and so great; so weak, and so strong; that I have been at once, both vain and excessively humbled.

Man presents himself under so many different aspects, he unites so many contradictions, that he must necessarily appear to be a creature entirely celestial, or a being entirely animal. By his soul, he stands in the most glorious and intimate relation to the Deity. By his body, in the most humbling and most striking manner doth he participate in non-entity. In the first view, he is a light which delights by its purity; in the second, a night which terrifies by its darkness.

Christianity, secure from every destructive shoal, by always keeping a just medium, points out to us man upon earth, and in the bosom of God, as in a double centre, whence we issued, and to which we must return.

The looks which every infant raises to heaven from the moment of its birth, the tears with which it bedews its cradle, in a striking manner prove its origin to be at once terrestrial and divine. If its soul, like a budding flower, expands by insensible degrees, the reason is, that it depends upon a body sluggish in its progressions.

At last, the time comes when reason pierces its way, and at first is only a spark, which either kindles a destructive flame, or produces a lively and beneficial light, according to the manner in which it is guided, and the objects to which it is attached. I speak here of the passions, the appetites,

and education, which are so many influences acting upon man, with different degrees of vigour. If sensible things acquire dominion over him, he becomes the miserable slave of every surrounding object; if, on the contrary, he be governed by spiritual things, he is monarch of himself, and his reason shines forth in all its lustre. Then God always appears present to him, and the creatures are in his eyes only perishable blessings, which he must use as if he used them not.

We ought to regard, as a particular blessing of Providence, the happiness of being born under a government which rectifies our thoughts, and in the bosom of a family which instructs us in the principles of virtue.

One thing is certain, that every man, in whatever region he may be born, owes a duty to God, to his neighbour, and to his country: if he be only a private citizen, he ought to strive, by his labour and his talents, to render himself useful to the community.

If of an elevated rank, he owes a tribute to the public, which must be paid, either by his application to affairs, or by his beneficence.

The man conversant with himself, lives almost perpetually in an enemy's country: boiling blood, a wandering imagination, contradictory desires, fiery passions, raise an intestine war, often attended with sad consequences.

He who desires to guide himself by the rules of wisdom, must pass his life in a con-

tinual struggle: for in us there are two men, the terrestrial and the spiritual, who are incessantly at war, and agree only when enlightened reason is the pilot; and an upright heart the helm.

Each of us ought to erect a throne to the Deity, in his own heart; otherwise it becomes a chaos, without order or symmetry.

The soul, surrounded by the senses, resembles a king encircled by his guards; but if this sentinel suffers himself to be forced, and be not attentive to repulse those vices that would usurp the sovereignty, and make themselves masters of the place, then doth man groan in the most cruel anarchy.

Hence comes it, that materialists and vicious men are so numerous. The germ of immortality is choked, and the soul is utterly disregarded, while they blindly follow the torrent of the passions. In vain doth she employ the voice of her faithful monitor, conscience. They withdraw from her the obedience which is her due; and openly treat as a chimera, that purely intellectual substance which may be justly called the mother of our thoughts, of our reasonings, and our affections.

It was necessary that man should be at the same time terrestrial and spiritual, in order to answer his destination, according to the will of the Deity. Without a body he could not have enjoyed the material world, of which he was to be an inhabitant; without a soul, he would have been incapable of the know-

ledge and possession of his Creator. As a mixed being, he is at once subordinate to the elements, and superior to the universe.

Without man, the earth is only a vast desert; let us give it a juster epithet, it is only a grave: it requires his hand for its cultivation; his society to be inhabited; so that, with reason she looks up to him as her master and sovereign. Accordingly she is attentive to acknowledge his supremacy and his care, by offering him, according to the course of the seasons, the most beautiful flowers, and the most excellent fruits.

The misfortune is, that this man, whom the earth obeys as her king, leaves marks of his crimes and errors; there is no country which has not been bedewed with bloodshed, by hatred or fanaticism, by love or ambition. The virtues have never appeared in the world but like flashes of lightning, which shine and disappear in the bosom of the storms.

Yet, perhaps, man is not so malignant as is imagined: idleness leads him into more excesses than perversity. Opportunities of doing mischief rise in crowds round the man who is unemployed; I pretend not to paint man such as he is, but I have said enough to give a just idea of him, and oblige him to own, that when he unites himself to God, he is a whole, but when separated from him, nothing.

Reason, without religion, like those luminous exhalations which rise in the bosom

of night, enlighten only to guide to the brink of some precipice. This age offers the most sorrowful examples of it! This age, which, notwithstanding the wit and knowledge with which it is decorated, seems to forget God himself, in order to pursue and adore phantoms.

Great part of mankind are mere abortions; they either cramp their heart by attaching it only to perishable objects, or stifle their understanding by employing it only in useless pursuits. Even the most sublime sciences are below the dignity of our souls, if they lead us not up to the Deity, their principle and end.

These misfortunes have their source in man's not being sufficiently sensible of the excellence of his soul, in his placing his vanity in what can only humble him, in his being defiled with the spots of sin. Death, which awaits him from the moment of his entrance into the world, can alone make him perfectly comprehend the importance of rising above all objects of sense; but death warns us not of our errors, until the time for correcting them is no more. We imagine ourselves still in our cradle while he is opening our tomb, and casting us into it in the midst of our projects. It is inconceivable with what a rapid course the moments flow from our birth to our death. I compare them to a flash of lightning, which issues from a cloud, again to enter its bosom; so that, in a figurative sense, we may say man

is born, and dies in the space of a single day. His birth is the dawn, his infancy the morning, his manhood the meridian, and his death the evening. Then all objects really disappear from him, and eternal night overwhelms him in darkness; unless he be illuminated by that uncreated light with which the just shall be filled.

This great object man ought to keep incessantly in view; if he would be what he ought, let him represent to himself Death, holding the fatal urn, in which all generations are reduced to dust. This is the spectacle on which we must fix our eyes, if we would live like Christian philosophers. Thus man, here below, is only a shadow, which must pass away; if we would entertain a high idea of him, he must be contemplated in eternity. It is, doubtless, a more glorious object than the firmament itself, to behold at its birth and its death that worm, called man, pass even into the bosom of God, at the moment when the earth crumbles under his feet, and a temporal life is taken from him, that it may make room for one entirely divine.

It is astonishing that this man, brought into the world for so great purposes, should be so incurious to know them, and should incorporate himself with the vilest and most worthless objects, while he is expected in another world to be essentially united with the Deity himself.

I am sensible that the night of the grave is a chaos which we cannot unravel while we languish in this valley of tears.

It is a gulph in which all our reason is lost, and which to us will be for ever unknown till seen. Every time we see a man disappear, to go into the region of the dead, we ought to be assured that then all the faculties of his soul acquire an activity which serves to make him feel, in an ineffable manner, his eternal happiness or misery. Man passes into the other life as he came into this, without knowing in what country he is landed.

When we have lost sight of this world, to which we were accustomed, another presents itself, but so extraordinary and so sublime, as to bear no relation to the present.

In vain do we apply to the sciences, to raise us to the uncreated being. This life, properly speaking, is only the life of the body, so severe is the tyranny of our appetites and of our wants, but the future life is entirely that of the soul. There will it blossom, as in its proper soil; it will no more be clogged with a mass of flesh, which retarded all its operations, and so confounded it with terrestrial objects, that we would have suffered ourselves to be captivated by them, had not care been taken to silence the passions. Thus must we re-unite the present with the future, the earth with heaven; in a word, this world with the other, in order to be thoroughly acquainted with man; for,

in fact, he so appertains to the present and the future life, that we only have a shadow of him if we do not follow him beyond the tomb. There he is expected, that he may come to the full knowledge of his greatness; and there he will see himself like a new Phœnix, rise resplendent from his ashes; then will he learn, that his destiny was to live in the Being of Beings.

Were man attentive to contemplate himself here below, in the view of what he is to be at his death; he would wish to hear frequent mention made of that happy moment when he shall be stripped of this miserable life, which retards his glory and felicity.

Death, from which we have so great aversion, is notwithstanding the brightest and most glorious moment to man, if, while on this earth, he hath faithfully fulfilled his task according to the laws prescribed by religion. I form to myself the good man, in his dying moments, like the sun, which, after being covered by a thick cloud, at last pierces through the shades and mists, and shines forth with double lustre. The wants and passions of this life are so many clouds which darken us, and hide even from our own eyes our dignity and our faculties.

I am not surprized, that to the Christian philosophers, death was a continual subject of meditation. When rightly viewed, it offers to mankind nothing but what is great, nothing but what is cheering. But we judge

of it only by the sepulchral horrors; that is, by what has a relation solely to our body, and then it appears to us the most frightful spectacle.

This occasioned the saying of Sir Charles Borromeo, 'That if death was the body's 'enemy, it was the soul's good friend, and 'that man did not understand his own in-'terests when he did not wish for it.'

Ought that moment, which will crown us with glory and happiness, to be an object of our hatred? The body is a frail building, which must necessarily be demolished, that the soul may fly to its centre. It is like those scaffolds which architects use for the construction of a palace, but which they remove when the pile is completed.

It is not to be doubted, that the reproaches of conscience ordinarily give rise to this excessive fear of death. Doubtless it is awful by reason of the ever inscrutable judgments of God; but he is mercy itself. He desireth not the death of a sinner, and assures us that, when we return sincerely to him, he will forget all our iniquities, were they numerous as the sand of the sea.

In the eyes of faith, death, far from being the destruction of man, is a second creation much more wonderful than the first; because, instead of those miseries with which we have been beset from our birth, we shall find, in dying, consolations, and blessings 'Which the eye hath not seen,

‘ nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into
‘ the heart of man to conceive.’

LETTER XIII.

YOU have often solicited me to compose a treatise on the church; but, terrified by the boundless extent of the subject, I drop the pencil from my hands every time I attempt to sketch that magnificent picture.

When I reflect that God himself, by his Word and Spirit, has begotten the church, in order to make of her a second heaven, much more luminous than the first; and has given her his glory and holiness, to serve as a guiding light through all ages and nations. I feel my courage forsake me, and my very existence absorbed in gratitude and adoration. This church we shall not know perfectly till we are in the bosom of God, from whom she is an emanation, and to whom, as to her supreme happiness, she incessantly tends. The world is a veil here below, which hides from us her brightness; and it must necessarily be rent and disappear, that we may behold that divine church in all her beauty and all her immensity. How many men, powerful in word and in deed, between Adam and the last of men, who shall complete the mysterious ring in which will be comprehended all the celestial spirits and all the saints! This is, truly, that innumerable

multitude mentioned in the Apocalypse, which John saw in the midst of an ineffable rapture.

In a mystical sense, the church is an exact counterpart of the material world; she is continually vivified by a central and divine fire; enlightened by a sun, even in the middle of the night; endowed with a fertility which makes her bud and bring forth fruit for time and for eternity: watered with a miraculous dew, by which, like nature, she is at once embellished and refreshed: she has her diamonds, her pearls, her metals, her plants, her flowers.

All the works of God are connected by so close relations, in such perfect harmony, that the corporeal aids the spiritual, the visible is united with the invisible, in order to form a whole, which blesses its Creator, and proclaims his excellence and majesty.

Every private person in the church has his peculiar opinions with regard to religion, every sect its characteristic doctrine; but in the holy society, there is only *one faith*, *one salvation*, *one baptism*.

LETTER XIV.

Written in illness to a Friend.

I AM truly very ill, but what comforts me is, that it is not of my own seeking, for

I always thought, that every man should be careful of his health.

Ignorant devotion will not agree in this truth; however, there is no doubt, that by destroying the springs of life, we put it out of our power to discharge our duties.

Sickness, when it is not an effect produced by some excess, but is sent directly from God, is the most proper penitence to expiate our sins and errors. It scatters a wholesome bitterness over the pleasures of this life; it shades the objects which seem to dazzle us; it insensibly detaches us from whatever is mortal, and makes us familiar with death.

I have never been so sensible of my own insignificance, as since the beginning of my illness; I have seen that my body is only an edifice which tumbles to pieces when least expected. Sometimes my disorder is acute, and sometimes it seems to sleep, but it is only to wake with double violence.

Man, from the moment of his birth, becomes exposed to all kinds of infirmities and accidents, and may look upon every thing around him as the immediate cause of his ruin. When the body becomes weak, the soul should seem to leave it to be united more closely with God, which is the only means of rising superior to pains and sufferings, for all possible happiness is to be found in God.

LETTER XV.

YOUR correspondent is now reduced to a state of great weakness, and employing his emaciated fingers in writing to you. Had I viewed only the glory of this world, I would have said to death, when he pre sented to me the cup of bitterness, *Let that cup pass from me.* But happily my thoughts were entirely taken up with heaven, and I exclaimed to myself, *How pleasing is this cup!*

It is certain that in the eyes of faith there is no greater blessing than to unite ourselves to death, before he strikes the last blow. Since I feel him within me, and draw him in with my breath, he seems disarmed of his terrors, and while my days diminish, they become more valuable, by bringing me nearer to eternity.

Here the violence of my pains obliges me to lay down my pen...I know not when, or if ever I shall resume it.

A moment's ease, after seven days and nights of continual pain, puts the pen again into my hand. One thing comforts me, that by the favour of heaven my mind acquires strength as my body decays, and there is only one thing that gives me real affliction. I have not done all the good I ought to have done, for which reason I earnestly intreat you to pray to God, that he would pardon me, and deign to accept my small

remains of life, as an expiation for my sins.

I die as I lived with gratitude to all who have done me service, and always your friend. ....Forget me in the sight of men, before whom I shall soon be only a portion of dust, but remember me before God, in whom I have rested all my hope, that I may not be covered with confusion in eternity.

It has been his will to shew me, in a dreadful manner, the nothingness of grandeur, even when I was surrounded with it, by mixing for me a cup of gall and wormwood. Blessed be his name.

If I have not the consolation of seeing you here, I shall expect you in eternity, where I hope we shall enjoy the invaluable blessing of meeting again in God, who will then be our universe, our element, and our life.

This 26th of August, 1774.

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